



A BRIEF SURVEY OF
ENGLISH AND AMERICAN
LITERATURE
TISDEL



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A BRIEF SURVEY OF ENGLISH AND
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A BRIEF SURVEY OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE

BY

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PREFACE

THIS book is intended especially to meet the needs of secondary schools in which only a moderate amount of time is devoted to the history of literature, and where a brief survey of English and American literature in a single volume is required. There has been a growing belief that the study *about* literature should be reduced to a minimum in order that as much time as possible might be given to the study of the literature itself. Much study about authors whose books the student has never read is of doubtful utility. A wiser plan is to use a brief account of the history of the literature with a large amount of reading in the literature itself arranged chronologically. To be sure, a certain amount of historical study is necessary. Students should be able to group the classics which they study in proper historical perspective and to see how these classics are the outgrowth of the life of the time in which they were written. For this purpose, however, no elaborate and detailed account of books which the student has never read is necessary. Such an elaborate study consumes an undue amount of time, confuses the student whose reading has been limited, and makes the study of literature uninspiring. The plan of the following book, therefore, is to give a very brief account of the progress of English and American literature, to mention only the most important literary productions, to suggest very briefly their connection with the life of the period in which they were produced, and to point out in a general way their significance as pieces of literary

art. Each chapter is accompanied with a list of suggested readings from the literature mentioned in the chapter. Emphasis should be placed upon these readings and enough of them required to keep the study of the chapter from becoming a perfunctory learning of dry facts. The history should be carefully subordinated to the study of the literature itself.

In the preparation of the chapters on the history of English literature, I have been particularly indebted to Moody and Lovett's *History of English Literature*. In the final chapter of Part II, which treats of the development of the short-story in America, my obligation to Canby's *A Study of the Short-story in English* is obvious. I am also indebted for many helpful suggestions to my colleagues, Professors H. M. Belden and A. H. R. Fairchild.

F. M. T.

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PART I

A BRIEF SURVEY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

CHAPTER I

THE OLD ENGLISH PERIOD

(a) THE EARLY LITERATURE OF THE ANGLO-SAXONS

The People. — For the beginnings of English literature we must go back to a time before our Anglo-Saxon forefathers came to England, when they were still living on the shores of the North Sea in Denmark and about the mouth of the Elbe River in northern Germany. They were Low-German tribes, allied more closely to the modern Dutch than to the modern Germans both by language and by blood. It is thought that they did not penetrate far into the swamps and forests of the interior, but lived along the shore and on the sea. They were uncivilized people, but not savages. Their literature shows — and we always go to literature to find out the inner life of a people — that they loved their homes, revered their women, felt the influences of Nature, believed in their gods, loved personal freedom, sought honor and glory. They were adventurous seafarers, stern of heart and strong of hand; but they were not pirates.

Their Gloomy Life. — Their life was gloomy. Denmark and Germany are lands of cloud and mist. During the entire year the sun can be seen only a third of the time that it is above the horizon. In winter, darkness comes in the middle of the afternoon. Moreover, the struggle with storm and sea was long and hard. No wonder this people was a stern and somber race, with a gloomy religion, and with melancholy ideas of life and fate. Life was almost without joy save

perhaps the joy of conflict ; and the whole of man's life, with whatever of joy it might have, was but the flicker of a candle between two great darknesses. The essential gloom of it was well expressed somewhat later in Northumbria by one of their own chiefs :

"You remember, it may be, O king, that which sometimes happens in winter when you are seated at table with your earls and thanes. Your fire is lighted, and your hall warmed, and without is rain and snow and storm. Then comes a swallow flying across the hall ; he enters by one door, and leaves by another. The brief moment while he is within is pleasant to him ; he feels not rain nor cheerless winter weather ; but the moment is brief — the bird flies away in the twinkling of an eye, and he passes from winter to winter. Such, methinks, is the life of man on earth, compared with the uncertain time beyond. It appears for a while ; but what is the time which comes after — the time which was before ? We know not. If, then, this new doctrine [Christianity] may teach us somewhat of greater certainty, it were well that we should regard it."

Literature of Tradition. — Life, however, was not altogether without solace. In the long winter evenings the lord and his retainers gathered in the hall and sat around the mead bench, drinking together and listening to the song of the scôp and the gleeman. These poets and reciters kept alive the traditions of the people, interpreting their ideals in myth and legend and heroic story. This was their literature ; not books, not even manuscripts. Stories of gods and heroes passed from generation to generation by word of mouth, even as the story of the wrath of Achilles was handed down among the prehistoric Greeks. Some of these stories are history ; most of them, myths about the struggle of the race with sea and storm and pestilence.

When our forefathers came to England in the fifth century, they brought with them these traditions just as the pre-

historic Greeks took their traditions to Asia Minor ; and just as the story of the siege of Troy developed in Asia Minor into *The Iliad*, so the Anglo-Saxon legends developed in England into an Anglo-Saxon epic, *Beowulf*.

“ **Beowulf.** ” — The scene of the early part of this story is Denmark. Hrothgar, King of the Danes, had built a splendid mead hall by the sea, where he and his thanes gathered to feast and to listen to the songs of the gleemen. But a frightful monster, Grendel, came now and again and carried off the warriors to devour them in his lair. Arms could not prevail against him, and joy was turned to mourning in Hrothgar’s Hall. At length from across the sea came the hero Beowulf to fight with the monster in the hall, and to pursue him wounded to the death to his lair beneath the waters of a sea pool. Here Beowulf also meets and destroys Grendel’s mother. The hero then returns in great honor to his home in South Sweden, where he rules over his people for fifty years. In his old age, he destroys a fire dragon, and thereby secures for his people a great treasure-hoard ; but, in the battle, he loses his own life. A grateful people burn his body in pomp upon a funeral pyre and, upon a promontory overlooking the sea, erect a memorial barrow above his ashes. The end of the poem is too fine to pass over without quoting :

“Then fashioned for him the folk of Geats
firm on the earth a funeral-pile,
and hung it with helmets and harness of war
and breastplates bright, as the boon he asked ;
and they laid amid it the mighty chieftain,
heroes mourning their master dear.
Then on the hill that hugest of balefires
the warriors wakened. Wood-smoke rose
black over blaze, and blent was the roar
of flame with weeping (the wind was still),

till the fire had broken the frame of bones,
hot at the heart. In heavy mood
their misery moaned they, their master's death.
Wailing her woe, the widow old,
her hair upbound, for Beowulf's death
sung in her sorrow, and said full oft
she dreaded the doleful days to come,
deaths enow, and doom of battle,
and shame. — The smoke by the sky was devoured.

“The folk of the Weders fashioned there
on the headland a barrow broad and high,
by ocean-farers far descried :
in ten days' time their toil had raised it,
the battle-brave's beacon. Round brands of the pyre
a wall they built, the worthiest ever
that wit could prompt in their wisest men.
They placed in the barrow that precious booty,
the rounds and the rings they had reft erewhile,
hardy heroes, from hoard in cave, —
trusting the ground with treasure of earls,
gold in the earth, where ever it lies useless to men as of
yore it was.

“Then about that barrow the battle-keen rode
atheling-born, a band of twelve,
lament to make, to mourn their king,
chant their dirge, and their chieftain honor.
They praised his earlship, his acts of prowess
worthily witnessed : and well it is
that men their master-friend mightily laud,
heartily love, when hence he goes
from life in the body forlorn away.

“Thus made their mourning the men of Geatland,
for their hero's passing his hearth-companions :
quoth that of all the kings of earth,
of men he was the mildest and most belov'd,
to his kin the kindest, keenest for praise.”

In this poem we see the scenes with which our forefathers were familiar, enter into their hopes and fears, and realize their passion for honor and glory, their high feeling of duty, and the stern heroism with which they took leave of life.

Other poems which give us insight into Anglo-Saxon character and life are *Widsith*, an account of the wanderings of a gleeman; *The Sea-farer*, written in the spirit of Odysseus, though the northern seas differ much from the Mediterranean; and the *Battle of Brunanburh* and the *Battle of Maldon*, fine expressions of the warlike spirit of the race.

(b) THE TRADITIONAL LITERATURE OF THE CELTS

The Celts in Britain. — The people who inhabited England — or Britain as it was then called — before the Anglo-Saxon conquest, were Celts, that branch of the Indo-European family of races which had overspread France, Spain, and the British Islands before the time of recorded history in western Europe. Cæsar had fought against many of the Celtic tribes in Gaul, and in 55 B.C. had crossed over into Britain and defeated the British tribes there. Later Britain had become a Roman province, adopting to a certain extent the civilization of Rome. By the early part of the fifth century, however, the Roman legions had been withdrawn from Britain to protect the imperial city from the inroads of the Teutonic tribes of northern Europe, leaving the Celts of Britain to take care of themselves. They resisted the Anglo-Saxon invaders as best they could; but they were little by little driven back into the mountains of Wales and Scotland, and some of them passed over into Armorica on the northwest coast of France.

Literature of the Britons. — These people, as well as the Anglo-Saxons, had their traditional literature of myth and legend and heroic story, which has had a large influence in

the development of English literature. These traditions clustered especially about the name of Arthur, supposed to be a British prince who gathered the scattered bands of his people about him, and stemmed for a time the tide of Anglo-Saxon invasion, defeating the invaders in twelve great battles, of which the last was the famous battle of Mount Badon. The early form of these stories is not known to us. We have no mention of them until about the ninth century; and, so far as we know, they did not find their way into manuscript until the eleventh or twelfth century, being transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth like the story of the wrath of Achilles, and the story of the exploits of Beowulf. They need not be discussed in this chapter, for, in the form in which they have come down to us, they belong to a time later than the Old English period. It is enough to say here that they reveal a people quite different from the Anglo-Saxon; a less somber people, gayer and more fanciful, more eager, more excitable, more buoyant, more appreciative of beauty, richer in sentiment, more keenly sensitive to joy and sorrow; but less steady, less persevering, less enduring, less likely to conquer, to achieve, and to prevail.

(c) CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

When the Anglo-Saxons conquered Britain, they were pagans, and they remained pagans for one hundred and fifty years. Then Christianity came.

The Coming of Christianity. — One day in Rome in the latter half of the sixth century, a monk by the name of Gregory, seeing in the slave market at Rome two fair-haired slaves from Britain, asked to what race they belonged and was told that they were Angles. Thinking their faces more like Angels than Angles, he determined that this race should know Christianity; and later when he became Pope, sent

St. Augustine to convert them. St. Augustine came to southern England at the very end of the sixth century, established monasteries and schools, and instituted Christian civilization. About the same time also monks came from Ireland, which had long been a center of religion and learning, and established Irish (Celtic) monasteries in the north. These two streams of Christian influence brought to the English new thoughts and feelings, new ideas about life, and before long produced a literature different in many ways from the traditional pagan literature of the earlier Anglo-Saxons.

Cædmon. — The first Christian literature grew up in the north during the seventh century. One of the most important of the northern monasteries was at Whitby on the eastern coast, northeast of the city of York (see map). Here lived Cædmon, a poor ignorant man, who, if the legend about him is true, was miraculously led to the writing of poetry. Bede, who was born about the time of the death of Cædmon, tells the story in his *Ecclesiastical History*.

“There was in the monastery of this abbess a certain brother especially distinguished by the grace of God, since he was wont to make poems breathing of piety and religion. Whatever he learned of Sacred Scripture by the mouth of interpreters, he in a little time gave forth in poetical language composed with the greatest sweetness and depth of feeling, in English, his native tongue; and the effect of his poems was ever and anon to incite the souls of many to despise the world and long for the heavenly life. Not but that there were others after him among the people of the Angles who sought to compose religious poetry; but none there was who could equal him. He (Cædmon) did not learn the art of song from men, nor through the means of any man; rather did he receive it as a free gift from God. Hence it came to pass that he never was able to compose poetry of a frivolous or idle sort; none but such as pertain to religion suited a tongue so religious as his. Living always the life of a layman until well advanced in years, he had never learned

the least thing about poetry. In fact, so little did he understand of it that when at a feast it would be ruled that every one present should, for the entertainment of the others, sing in turn, he would, as soon as he saw the harp coming anywhere near him, jump up from the table in the midst of the banqueting, leave the place, and make the best of his way home.

"This he had done at a certain time, and leaving the house where the feast was in progress, had gone out to the stable where the care of the cattle had been assigned to him for that night. There, when it was time to go to sleep, he had lain down for that purpose. But while he slept some one stood by him in a dream, greeted him, called him by name, and said, 'Cædmon, sing me something.' To this he replied, 'I know not how to sing, and that is the very reason why I left a feast and came here, because I could not sing.' But the one who was talking with him answered, 'No matter, you are to sing for me.' 'Well, then,' said he, 'what is it that I must sing?' 'Sing,' said the other, 'the beginning of created things.' At this reply he immediately began to sing verses in praise of God the Creator, verses that he had never heard, and whose meaning is as follows: 'Now should we praise the Keeper of the heavenly kingdom, the might of the Creator and His counsel, the works of the Father of glory; how He, though God eternal, became the author of all marvels. He, the almighty Guardian of mankind, first created for the sons of men heaven as a roof, and afterwards the earth.' This is the meaning, but not the precise order, of the words which he sang in his sleep; for no songs, however well they may be composed, can be rendered from one language into another without loss of grace and dignity. When he rose from sleep, he remembered all that he had sung while in that state, and shortly after added, in the same strain, many more words of a hymn befitting the majesty of God.

"In the morning he went to the steward who was set over him, and showed him what gift he had acquired. Being led to the abbess, he was bidden to make known his dream and repeat his poem to the many learned men who were present, that they all might give their judgment concerning the thing which he related, and

whence it was; and they were unanimously of the opinion that heavenly grace had been bestowed upon him by the Lord. They then set about expounding to him a piece of sacred history or teaching, bidding him, if he could, to turn it into the rhythm of poetry. This he undertook to do, and departed. In the morning he returned and delivered the passage assigned to him, converted into an excellent poem. The abbess, honoring the grace of God as displayed in the man, shortly afterward instructed him to forsake the condition of a layman and take upon himself the vows of a monk. She thereupon received him into the monastery with his whole family, and made him one of the company of the brethren, commanding that he should be taught the whole course and succession of Biblical history. He, in turn, calling to mind what he was able to learn by the hearing of the ear, and, as it were, like a clean animal, chewing upon it as a cud, transformed it all into most agreeable poetry; and, by echoing it back in a more harmonious form, made his teachers in turn listen to him. Thus he rehearsed the creation of the world, the origin of man, and all the story of Genesis; the departure of Israel from Egypt and their entry into the Promised Land, together with many other histories from Holy Writ; the incarnation of our Lord, his passion, resurrection, and ascension into heaven; the coming of the Holy Ghost and the teaching of the Apostles; moreover, he made many poems about the terror of the future judgment, the awfulness of the pains of hell, and the joy of the heavenly kingdom, besides a great number about the mercies and judgments of God. In all these he exerted himself to allure men from the love of wickedness, and to impel them to the love and practice of righteous living; for he was a very devout man, humbly submissive to the monastic rule, but full of consuming zeal against those who were disposed to act otherwise.

“Hence it came to pass that he ended his life with a fair death. For when the hour of his departure drew nigh, he was afflicted for the space of a fortnight with a bodily weakness which seemed to prepare the way; yet it was so far from severe that he was able during the whole of that time to walk about and converse. Near at hand there was a cottage, to which those who were sick and

appeared nigh unto death were usually taken. At the approach of evening on the same night when he was to leave the world, he desired his attendant to make ready a place there for him to take his rest. The attendant did so, though he could not help wondering at the request, since he did not seem the least like a person about to die. When he was placed in the infirmary, he was somehow full of good humor, and kept talking and joking with those who had already been brought there. Some time after midnight he asked whether they had the Eucharist at hand. 'What do you need of the Eucharist?' they answered, 'you aren't going to die yet, for you are just as full of fun in talking with us as if nothing were the matter with you.' 'Never mind,' said he, 'bring me the Eucharist.' Taking it in his hand, he asked, 'Are you all at peace with me, and free from any grudge or ill will?' 'Yes,' they all responded, 'we are perfectly at peace with you, and cherish no grievance whatever.' 'But are you,' said they, 'entirely at peace with us?' 'Yes, my dear children,' he answered without hesitation, 'I am at peace with all the servants of God.' And thus saying, he made ready for his entrance into the other life by partaking of the heavenly journey-bread. Not long after he inquired, 'How near is it to the hour when the brethren are wakened for lauds?' 'But a little while,' was the reply. 'Well then,' said he, 'let us wait for that hour,' and, making over himself the sign of the cross, he laid his head on the pillow, and falling into a light slumber, ended his life in silence. And so it came to pass that, as he had served the Lord in simplicity and purity of mind, and with serene attachment and loyalty, so by a serene death he left the world, and went to look upon His face. And meet in truth it was that the tongue which had indited so many helpful words in praise of the Creator, should frame its very last words in His praise, while in the act of signing himself with the cross and of commending his spirit into His hands. And that he foresaw his death is apparent from what has here been related."¹

The long epic poem which has come down to us associated

¹ Cook and Tinker, *Translations from Old English Poetry*, pp. 180-183.

with the name of Cædmon consists of a paraphrase of Genesis, Exodus, and a part of Daniel. It was not, however, all written by Cædmon; and no one knows exactly what parts are his. The tone is almost as much pagan as Christian. Armies and battles are described with enthusiasm. The destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea is sung with savage zest. The poem represents a civilization nominally Christian, but still permeated with pagan thought and feeling.

Cynewulf was another important poet who wrote in Anglo-Saxon. Almost nothing is known of his life. We are not sure how many of the poems attributed to him were really written by him; but some of them certainly were, since he worked his name into the text in a kind of cipher, using runes for the purpose.¹

“**Elene**” and “**Christ**.” — The most important of Cynewulf’s undoubted poems are *Elene* and *Christ*. *Elene* relates how Constantine, on the eve of battle, had a vision of the cross, and afterwards sent his mother, Elene, to search for the original cross in Jerusalem. The *Christ* tells the story of the nativity of Christ, his ascension, and the last judgment. Like most of the medieval writers and painters, Cynewulf loved to depict the tortures of the wicked and the joys of the redeemed. The *Christ*, however, is prevaillingly didactic, though rising at times to the level of genuine reflective poetry. The following is a typical passage: It compares life to a journey on the sea.

“Now ’tis most like as if we fare in ships
On the ocean’s flood, over the water cold,
Driving our vessels through the spacious seas
With horses of the deep. A perilous way is this
Of boundless waves, and there are stormy seas

¹ See Cook and Tinker, *Translations from Old English Poetry*, p. 83 f.

On which we toss here in this (reeling) world
O'er the deep paths. Ours was a sorry plight
Until at last we sailed unto the land,
Over the troubled main, Help came to us
That brought us to the haven of salvation,
God's Spirit-Son, and granted grace to us
That we might know e'en from the vessel's deck
Where we must bind with anchorage secure
Our ocean steeds, our stallions of the waves."

Bede's "Ecclesiastical History." — Another writer from the north of England was the Venerable Bede, who lived at Jarrow near the mouth of the Tyne. (See map.) He was a scholar, considering the time in which he lived; and although he made many mistakes, we owe to him most of our knowledge of English history from the landing of Cæsar down to the year 731. His principal work is *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, written in Latin, as most of his other works were. He is said to have made an Anglo-Saxon translation of the Gospel of St. John, but the manuscript is unfortunately lost. His account of Cædmon shows his interesting style.

The Coming of the Danes. — Near the end of the eighth century the Danes from the Baltic began to make inroads into northern England; and by the middle of the ninth century the learning and civilization of Northumbria had been practically swept away. Monasteries were demolished, teachers and scholars slain, and libraries utterly destroyed. The Northumbrian literature is preserved only in West Saxon transcripts, made, probably, at the court of King Alfred the Great (848-901).

Alfred the Great, who succeeded for a time in checking the Danes in their progress to the south, maintained at his court in Wessex a center of literature and scholarship. He

gathered learned men about him, established a court school, and caused many foreign manuscripts to be translated into Anglo-Saxon. He was himself a scholar and a translator. He gave to his people Anglo-Saxon versions of a manual of history and geography by Orosius, the *Consolations of Philosophy* by Boethius, and the *Pastoral Care* by Gregory. He translated Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, and, above all, developed the famous *Saxon Chronicle*, the earliest history of England in the language of the people. Extracts from the *Chronicle* are accessible in Manly's *English Prose*, and in Cook and Tinker's *Translations from Old English Prose*. Much of it, especially the account of Alfred's own reign, is literature as well as history. Alfred has fittingly been called the father of English prose.

After the death of Alfred (901 A.D.) literature declined. There was no national life, and consequently no national literature. Monks in the monasteries wrote homilies, and the *Saxon Chronicle* was continued; but the Anglo-Saxons had produced the best that was in them, and were in need of new blood and a new national impulse. These came with the Norman Conquest in 1066.

READINGS IN ANGLO-SAXON LITERATURE

1. *Beowulf*: Translated by Gummere (The Macmillan Company), and by Child in the Riverside Literature Series (Houghton, Mifflin, and Company).

2. Miscellaneous selections translated by Cook and Tinker in *Translations from Old English Poetry* and *Old English Prose* (Ginn and Company).

CHAPTER II

THE MIDDLE ENGLISH PERIOD

(a) THE ROMANCE AND THE BALLAD

The Norman Invasion. — In 1066 William of Normandy invaded England, won the battle of Hastings against Harold, the last of the Saxon kings, and set up in England a Norman kingdom. The Normans, as their name suggests, came originally from the north, and were allied by blood to the Danes who had devastated Northumbria and destroyed the Saxon civilization there. The Normans had settled in Northern France, had intermarried with the French, and had adopted the French language and many of the French customs and ideas of life. The result was a race which possessed the vigor and perseverance of the Teutons, and also the gayety, imagination, and sensitiveness of the French. It was well that such a race should come into England.

The Blending of the Races. — For many years the Normans and Saxons lived side by side in England as conquerors and conquered without much intermingling; but gradually the same thing happened which had happened when the Normans settled in France. The two races united. Norman and Saxon were merged to form the Englishman. The influence of the Celt and the Dane was not insignificant, but the composite Englishman was prevaillingly Saxon and Norman. Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* presents a picture of English life during the three centuries after the conquest, when the races were distinct and the language in hopeless confusion. Scott

has brought together, in the reign of Richard the Lion-hearted, race antagonism which belonged to a century previous, and ideas of chivalry which belonged to a century or two later, so that his history is not accurate as a picture of the time of Richard; but, if we wish to think of the three centuries together, *Ivanhoe* gives us a fairly adequate idea of life in this period of transition. That life is reflected also in the Middle English literature, especially in the romances and ballads which furnished the most important literature between the Norman Conquest and the time of Chaucer.

Beginning of Modern English. — Although the hostility between the races soon died out, it was longer before the languages blended into modern English. There were three languages in England immediately after the conquest: Latin, the language of learning; French, the language of the court and of polite society; and Saxon, the language of the common people. Moreover, there were three dialects of Saxon: the Northumbrian, the Midland, and the Southern, about as different as the Scotch of Burns and the English of Addison. It was not until the time of Chaucer (fourteenth century) that the Midland dialect finally triumphed and became the basis of modern English, absorbing many northern and southern forms, and adding to its vocabulary a large number of Norman-French words.¹

(1) ROMANCES

Arthurian Romance. — The Normans brought a new element into English literature. Preëminently interested in chivalry and romance, they possessed many stories of knightly prowess and romantic adventure, brilliant in description, extravagant in action, abounding in superstition. Among these

¹ Cf. *Ivanhoe*, Chapter I, for the relation of Norman-French and Saxon.

were stories of King Arthur and his knights. It will be remembered (see p. 5) that when the Britons were driven back into the fastnesses of Wales and the North, many of them passed over into Brittany in France, carrying with them traditions of their famous prince. These stories were developed in Brittany as well as in England by the addition of much popular folk-lore, myth, and legend, were further enlarged by the French, and, in the end, became popular all over Europe, extending even into Germany and Italy. Some of the earliest and best of the Arthur stories are in Norman-French. When the Normans came to England, the continental stream and the native Welsh stream of the Arthurian story came together and produced a variety of literature in Latin, French, and English.

Geoffrey of Monmouth's History. — The first important book to treat the Arthurian stories was Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, written in Latin about the middle of the twelfth century. Geoffrey pretended that his book was sober history, but he seems to have cared little for historic facts. Indeed he has been called "the champion liar of the twelfth century." His book is full of events which never could have happened — pure romance. He was in a position to know both Welsh and Breton traditions, for he belonged to a Welsh monastery which had intimate connections with the Bretons on the continent. The truth seems to be that he brought together the two masses of tradition and foisted them upon the public as genuine history. To be sure, he claimed to be translating an old manuscript, but no trace of such a manuscript has ever been found. It was the fashion to have a source upon which to base a book, so Geoffrey simply invented a book for the purpose. Although, then, Geoffrey's book was not written in the form of a romance, it is genuine romance material

and the real progenitor of the great mass of subsequent Arthurian literature, including Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* and Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*.

Layamon's "Brut." — Geoffrey's book was immediately translated into French by Wace of Jersey, who added much from oral tradition which Geoffrey seems not to have known. Wace's book, in turn, was translated into English and much enlarged about the year 1200 by a monk named Layamon. Layamon called his book *Brut*. It tells of the founding of the British nation by Brutus, a great grandson of Æneas, and then traces the course of British history down to the author's own time. Nearly a third of the book is taken up with the achievements of Arthur and his knights. Layamon was not content merely to translate Wace and Geoffrey and Bede, his acknowledged authorities; he himself lived on the Severn River close to the Welsh border, where he could not fail to become familiar with Celtic tradition; and this tradition he did not scruple to use. He adds, for instance, the story of the founding of the Round Table and the account of the fays who attended Arthur's birth and, after his last battle, carried him to Avalon to be healed of his wounds.

The Language of Layamon. — Layamon's book is also important because it was the first romance written for Englishmen in the English language. After the Norman Conquest, the English vernacular had ceased to be a literary tongue. Books were all written in Latin or French, except the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which was continued down to the year 1154. Layamon favored the popular language and employed it again for literary purposes. It had become much changed, however, in the century and a half since the conquest, resembling more the English of Chaucer than the English of Alfred and Cædmon.

The Holy Grail. — During the three centuries following

the Norman Conquest Arthurian romance was in a highly flourishing condition. At the beginning, the stories were purely pagan, but they early took on religious aspects, as the story of the Holy Grail so interestingly shows. This story is thought by some to have been originally a pagan myth about vegetation, a sacrifice to propitiate the god of fertility and growth, and thus to bring in the summer of joy and fruitfulness after the sadness and death of winter. Later the sacrificial vessel seems to have become confused with the cup from which Jesus drank at the last supper, and the sacrificial spear to have become the spear of Longinus, which pierced the side of Christ on the cross. The grail thus became Christian, representing the medieval idea of purity, and visible only to the pure in heart and the righteous.

“**Gawayne and the Green Knight.**” — Of the many romances which appeared in English during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the best, by almost universal consent, is *Gawayne and the Green Knight*. The following is the substance of the story:

“On New Year’s day, while Arthur and his knights are keeping the Yuletide feast at Camelot, a gigantic knight in green enters the banquet hall on horseback and challenges the bravest knight to present an exchange of blows; that is, he will expose his neck to a blow of his own big battle-ax, if any knight will agree to abide a blow in return. After some natural consternation and a fine speech by Arthur, Gawain accepts the challenge, takes the battle-ax, and with one blow sends the giant’s head rolling through the hall. The Green Knight, who is evidently a terrible magician, picks up his head and mounts his horse. He holds out his head and the ghastly lips speak, warning Gawain to be faithful to his promise and to seek through the world till he finds the Green Chapel. There, on next New Year’s day, the Green Knight will meet him and return the blow.

“The second canto of the poem describes Gawain’s long journey

through the wilderness on his steed Gringolet, and his adventures with storm and cold, with wild beasts and monsters, as he seeks in vain for the Green Chapel. On Christmas eve, in the midst of a vast forest, he offers a prayer to 'Mary, mildest mother so dear,' and is rewarded by sight of a green castle. He enters and is royally entertained by the host, an aged hero, and by his wife, who is the most beautiful woman the knight ever beheld. Gawain learns that he is at last near the Green Chapel, and settles down for a little comfort after his long quest.

"The next canto shows the life in the castle, and describes a curious compact between the host, who goes hunting daily, and the knight, who remains in the castle to entertain the young wife. The compact is, that at night each man shall give the other whatever good thing he obtains during the day. While the host is hunting, the young woman tries in vain to induce Gawain to make love to her, and ends by giving him a kiss. When the host returns and gives his guest the game he has killed, Gawain returns the kiss. On the third day, her temptations having twice failed, the lady offers Gawain a ring, which he refuses; but when she offers a magic green girdle that will preserve the wearer from death, Gawain, who remembers the giant's ax so soon to fall on his neck, accepts the girdle as a 'jewel for the jeopardy' and promises the lady to keep the gift secret. Here, then, are two conflicting compacts. When the host returns and offers his game, Gawain returns the kiss, but says nothing of the green girdle.

"The last canto brings our knight to the Green Chapel, after he is repeatedly warned to turn back in the face of certain death. The Chapel is a terrible place in the midst of desolation; and as Gawain approaches he hears a terrifying sound, the grating of steel on stone, where the giant is sharpening a new battle-ax. The Green Knight appears, and Gawain, true to his compact, offers his neck for the blow. Twice the ax swings harmlessly; the third time it falls on his shoulder and wounds him. Whereupon Gawain jumps for his armor, draws his sword, and warns the giant that the compact calls for only one blow, and that, if another is offered, he will defend himself.

"Then the Green Knight explains things. He is lord of the castle where Gawain has been entertained for days past. The first two swings of the ax were harmless, because Gawain had been true to his compact and twice returned the kiss. The last blow had wounded him, because he concealed the gift of the green girdle, which belongs to the Green Knight and was woven by his wife. Moreover, the whole thing has been arranged by Morgain the fay-woman (an enemy of Queen Guinevere, who appears often in the Arthurian romances). Full of shame, Gawain throws back the gift and is ready to atone for his deception; but the Green Knight thinks he has already atoned, and presents the green girdle as a free gift. Gawain returns to Arthur's court, tells the whole story frankly, and ever after that the knights of the Round Table wear a green girdle in his honor." ¹

The Arthurian Romances as a whole did not reach their best form until near the end of the fifteenth century. At that time Thomas Malory, an English knight, selected all that was best in the old English and French romances, and retold it in quaint and charming English prose. His book, *Morte d'Arthur*, is the original of most of the modern versions of the Arthur stories. It has inspired the great writers of England in nearly every generation since its appearance. There are many references to the stories in Shakespeare. Spenser made Arthur the connecting link between the parts of *The Faerie Queene*. Milton considered long whether he should not make the Arthurian material, instead of the fall of man, the subject of his great epic. In the nineteenth century Arnold, Tennyson, Morris, and Swinburne all wrote Arthurian stories. Perhaps no other literary material has played so large a part in English literature as these old romances.

There were other famous cycles of Romance, notably the

¹ Long, *English Literature*, pp. 57-58.

stories of Troy, the stories of Alexander, and the stories of Charlemagne, but none of them are so important in English literature as the native stories about Arthur.

(2) BALLADS

Ballad Literature. — The romances of chivalry, although based upon popular tradition, were, for the most part, put into literary form by the Normans, and really represent the courtly class. The common people had a popular literature all their own. They composed and sang the traditional ballads, passing them on from generation to generation by word of mouth. The origin of ballad making is far back in the primitive period of civilization, when the unity of tribe or nation was strong, and before the people had become divided into educated and uneducated classes. When these rude people met upon the green for game and dance and song, a leader would begin to chant a bit of heroic story, some achievement, perhaps, of a member of the tribe. Immediately the entire company would take it up, developing the story in song, and acting out the events in dramatic dance. In a certain sense the ballad was the production of the throng rather than of an individual artist. No one claimed the authorship. It represented the ideas of no particular individual. It was altogether spontaneous, objective, direct, — a pure story in its simplest form, without any marks of reflection and learning. The ballad was sung by everybody, changed at will, and transmitted to the next generation by word of mouth. Eventually it either passed out of remembrance or was caught by some maker of books and written down.

Robin Hood. — This “merry art of ballad making” in the old traditional manner is practically extinct, though it is said that the old English ballads survive by tradition

among the southern mountaineers, and ballads of a similar nature have been collected among the cowboys of the frontier. (See Lomax, John A: *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*.) In the years following the Norman Conquest, however, the custom was in vigorous survival in England. The most important ballads have to do with the story of Robin Hood, of which Sir Walter Scott made much use in *Ivanhoe*. Robin Hood is an idealized outlaw; a hero of the common people, brave and honest, hating all forms of injustice; an enemy of the rich and powerful; a friend of the poor, and particularly of unfortunate knights. He embodies the protest against the oppression of church and state.

A Gest of Robin Hode is one of the oldest as well as one of the best of the Robin Hood ballads. "The whole poem," says Professor Child, "may have been put together as early as 1400 or before." It is, however, based on still older ballads. There are at least three distinct episodes: Robin's experiences with the Knight, with the Sheriff, and with the King. Perhaps these were originally separate ballads. The story is very simple and direct, almost bald. Just the necessary facts are told, nothing more. The story moves, too, with great rapidity. When, for instance, the king has come to the forest in disguise and has defeated Robin in an archery contest, in which the penalty of defeat is a blow from the victor, we have the following simple scene:

"Then bespake good Gylberte,
And thus he gan say;
'Mayster,' he sayd, 'your takyll is lost,
Stande forth and take your pay.'

"'If it be so,' say'd Robyn,
'That may no better be,

Syr Abbot, I delyver the myn arowe,
I pray the, syr, serve thou me.'

" 'It falleth not for myn ordre,' sayd our kynge,
'Robyn, by thy leve,
For to smyte no good yeman,
For doute I sholde hym greve.'

" 'Smyte on boldely,' sayd Robyn,
'I give the largē leve:.'
Anone our kynge, with that worde,
He folde up his sleve,

And sych a buffet he gave Robyn,
To grounde he yede full nere:
'I make myn avowe to God,' sayd Robyn,
'Thou arte a stalworthe frere.

" 'There is pith in thyn arme,' sayd Robyn,
'I trowe thou canst well shete';
Thus our kynge and Robin Hode.
Togeder gan they mete."

Another famous ballad, somewhat later in date, is *Chevy-Chace*, a story of a hunt on the Scottish border ending in a clash of arms between the famous nobles Percy and Douglas. Another is *Tam Lin*, a supernatural ballad of transformation, in subject matter not unlike the "Ballad of Alice Brand" in *The Lady of the Lake*, but of course composed in a more primitive and, therefore, more genuinely ballad style.

"**Sir Patrick Spence.**"—Of all the ballads which have come down to us, however, none perhaps surpasses the strong and graphic ballad of *Sir Patrick Spence*. It is short enough for reproduction here.

1. "The king sits in Dumferling toune,
Drinking the blude-reid wine:

- ‘O whar will I get guid sailor,
To sail this schip of mine?’
2. “Up and spak an eldern knight,
Sat at the kings richt kne:
‘Sir Patrick Spence is the best sailor,
That sails upon the se.’
3. “The king has written a braid letter,
And signed it wi his hand,
And sent it to Sir Patrick Spence,
Was walking on the sand.
4. “The first line that Sir Patrick red,
A loud lauch lauched he;
The next line that Sir Patrick red,
The teir blinded his ee.
5. “‘O wha is this has don this deid,
This ill deid don to me,
To send me out this time o’ the yeir,
To sail upon the se!
6. “‘Mak hast, mak haste, my mirry men all,
Our guid schip sails the morne:’
‘O say no sae, my master deir,
For I feir a deadlie storme.
7. “‘Late late yestreen I saw the new moone,
Wi the auld moone in hir arme,
And I feir, I feir, my deir master,
That we will cum to harme.’
8. “O our Scots nobles wer richt laith
To weet their cork-heild schoone;
Bot lang owre a’ the play wer playd,
Thair hats they swam aboone.
9. “O lang, lang may their ladies sit,
Wi thair fans into their hand,

Or eir they se Sir Patrick Spence
Cum sailing to the land.

10. "O lang, lang may the ladies stand,
Wi thair gold kems in their hair,
Waiting for thair ain deir lords,
For they'll se thame na mair.
11. "Haf owre, haf owre to Aberdour,
It's fiftie fadom deip,
And thair lies guid Sir Patrick Spence,
Wi the Scots lords at his feit."

Here is story reduced to its lowest terms. There is nothing superfluous, for only the most significant facts are told. Much must be read between the lines, yet to read between the lines is easy, and the facts are unusually direct and graphic.

Outside of ballads and romances, little need be said of the literature between the Norman Conquest and the time of Chaucer. Two productions only are of special interest. *The Pearl* and *Ancren Riwle*. *The Pearl* is an intensely human picture of a father's grief over the loss of his little daughter; the *Ancren Riwle*, advice for the guidance of anchoresses, is one of the most beautiful pieces of early English prose. For further information on these and other productions of the period, the reader is referred to the standard histories of literature.

(b) THE AGE OF CHAUCER

The Rise of the People.—The fourteenth century is remarkable for the rising importance of the common people. The Hundred Years War between France and England, which broke out early in the century, not only loosened the Normans' political ties with France, but also emphasized their dependence upon the English peasantry. These peas-

ants made valuable soldiers. The success of Edward III and the Black Prince was largely due, not to knights in armor, but to English yeomen, who fought with the bow. Moreover, the scourge of the Black Death destroyed half of the people of the country, and so made labor rare and valuable. The common man began to realize his importance in the state, and to demand a larger freedom and clearer rights and privileges. In 1381 under the leadership of Wat Tyler, Jack Straw, and John Balle, the peasants marched to London, took possession of the city, and made their demands upon King Richard II. Their express demands were not granted, but they had demonstrated their power, and had become conscious of their wrongs and needs. The masses of the English people were beginning to think, and henceforth had to be reckoned with.

Langland's "*Vision of Piers Plowman*." — One of the most important literary figures connected with the awakening of the common people was William Langland (1332-1400), who wrote *The Vision of Piers Plowman*. In this dream, Langland brings together in an open field a crowd of people representing all classes of English society; the plowman, the laborer, the tradesman, the lawyer, the minstrel, the friar, the pardoner, the knight. The central figure is Lady Bribery, expressing the corrupt social life of the time. Langland's sympathies are distinctly with those who are made to labor that others may enjoy the fruit of their labors. One entire division of the poem is a plea for the dignity and worth of toil. The Seven Deadly Sins come to Piers to have him lead them on the way to Truth, but he refuses to go until his field has been plowed. They all set to work on the field and thereby secure their salvation, for, as they work, pardon comes to them for their sins. Another division shows the religious awakening of the time. Its subject is "The

Search for Dowel, Dobet, Dobest." He who does well is moral and upright; he who does better is also loving and kind; he does best who lives after the model of Christ. Indeed, Piers in a way represents Christ, and appears in the poem under a halo of light.

John Wyclif. — A still more influential leader of the people was John Wyclif (1323–1384), whose greatest service was his translation of the Bible into English. This Bible profoundly affected the life of the English people in spite of the fact that it had to be circulated entirely in manuscript, and for that reason could not be universally read. It was, moreover, the first influential piece of real literary English prose, with the possible exception of *Sir John Mandeville's Travels*. Its influence both on English prose and on the lives of the English people can hardly be overestimated. Wyclif also organized the famous Lollard movement for the purification of religion, modifying many of the ideas of the Roman church. Influential friends protected him from persecution during his lifetime, but some years after his death his bones were dug up and burned, and his ashes thrown into the river Swift.

Geoffrey Chaucer (1340–1400), however, was by far the greatest literary figure of the time. He was not a reformer in the sense that Langland and Wyclif were. He made no war upon society. He made no war against the church. He was, however, a very penetrating critic of life and the prince of story-tellers. The entire life of the time is reflected in his poetry. He knew the court; he knew the common people; and he has given us a very graphic picture of the virtues and follies of both. His poems, especially *The Canterbury Tales*, are full of the most delightful satire on all classes.

Period of French Influence. — His literary life naturally divides itself into three periods. Until he was thirty years

old, he was a student of French life and literature. Under the French influence, he wrote in English verse a long translation of the famous French poem, *The Romaunt of the Rose*, an allegory about love. The winning of a lady's favor is represented by the effort to secure a rose which blooms in a mystic garden. Some of the characters in the action are Love, Hate, Envy, Jealousy, Idleness, Sweet Looks. *The Death of Blanche the Duchesse* also belongs to this period. It was written after the death of Blanche, wife of Chaucer's patron, John of Gaunt, to solace the bereavement of her husband.

The Italian Period. — In 1370 Chaucer was sent abroad by the government on the first of those diplomatic missions upon which he was to be engaged for the next fifteen years. He visited Italy and soon came under the influence of the great Italian writers. The period, therefore, from 1370 to 1386 has been called the Italian period of Chaucer's life. To this period belong *Troilus and Criseyde*, *The House of Fame*, and *The Legend of Good Women*.

"The Legend of Good Women." — The prologue to *The Legend of Good Women* relates that on Chaucer's return one evening from a walk in the fields he fell asleep in his garden and dreamed that he saw coming toward him across the meadow the God of Love, suncrowned and radiant faced, leading by the hand the royal Alcestis. The God of Love chides Chaucer for writing books of false and fickle love such as *The Romaunt of the Rose* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, when he might be writing of the virtue and faithfulness of women. Alcestis pleads in his behalf, and secures for him the penance of writing a series of stories in praise of good women. Then follow nine stories celebrating, among others, Cleopatra, Dido, Thisbe, Lucretia, Ariadne, and Medea.

The House of Fame is also a dream. Chaucer finds him-

self in a temple of glass sacred to Venus. The place is full of beautiful statues, one, in particular, being a statue of Venus herself, floating in a lake. The chief interest of the poet, however, is in a brass tablet upon which he reads the story of *The Æneid*, beginning,

“I wol now singe, if that I can,
The armes and al-so the man,
That first came, through his destinie,
In Itaile, with ful moche pyne,
Unto the strondes of Lavyne.”

Practically all of Book I is taken up with a summary of Virgil's *Æneid*, emphasis being placed upon Æneas's desertion of Dido.

In the second book, Jove's bright eagle snatches up the poet, and carries him to the House of Fame, midway between heaven and earth. Thither all the sounds of the world are rushing, making a noise like “the beating of the sea against the hollow rocks in time of tempest.” Within the house, Fame sits upon her throne receiving various groups of people who come to have their fames decreed. Eolus, the god of the winds, stands by ready to blow their fames upon one of two clarions, Praise or Slander. Outside the palace is a house sixty miles long, made of twigs in constant motion. Here every rumor good or bad takes its shape before going to the House of Fame to be blown over the earth by the trumpet of Eolus. The poem breaks off abruptly at the 2158th line.

The English Period. — The third period of Chaucer's life and work is peculiarly English. He lived in London in close touch with English life, growing away gradually from French and Italian influences. He felt keenly all the new forces of English national life: the sense of unity between Norman and Saxon, the national pride in the foreign victories of Edward III, the growing power of parliament, the awakened

consciousness of the common people. All this he sought to interpret in the crowning work of his life, *The Canterbury Tales*.

The scheme of *The Canterbury Tales* was happily chosen. In the Prologue the poet imagines himself one evening at the Tabard Inn in Southwark, near the southern end of London Bridge, in company with twenty-nine men and women from all classes of English society, ready to start on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Thomas à Becket at Canterbury. Chaucer describes these pilgrims with fine accuracy and great good humor.

The Pilgrims. — The chivalric courtly class is represented by the knight and the squire. The knight is a model of truth and honor, liberality and courtesy. He has fought for the faith in many tournaments and battles, and always had renown. The squire, his son, is a gay young man of twenty, with curly hair and richly embroidered garments, and adept at singing, dancing, and playing the flute, yet skillful and strong withal. To the peasantry belong a yeoman, with coat and hood of green, and a forester with bow and arrows and horn. The church is represented by a group comprised of a prioress, a monk, a friar, a parson, a pardoner, and a summoner. They represent the shortcomings and the virtues of the churchmen of the time, both the corrupt ecclesiastics, against whom Langland wrote, and the reforming class, to which Wyclif belonged. The monk is a man of pleasure, provided with rich clothes and fine horses and especially fond of hunting and feasting. The friar is “a wanton and a merry” ecclesiastic, free in granting his absolutions, and easy in imposing penances. The summoner is a very repulsive person, with blotched face, fiery red, and with a fondness for garlic, onions, and strong drink. The pardoner is a careless fellow with a wallet full of “pardons come from Rome all



THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMS.
After the fresco painting by William Blake.

hot." He carries also bits of cloth and pig's bones, which he sells as relics of the holy saints. The prioress is a dainty lady, whose table manners are the most exquisite, and who sings the divine service "entuned in her nose ful semely." The parson is the true and noble representative of the church, rich in holy thought and work, a real preacher of the Gospel, careful of the good of his people, helpful in sickness and distress, a noble example of right living, a true follower of Wyclif and the other reformers. The landed proprietors are represented by the franklin, Epicurus's own son; the professional classes, by the doctor and the lawyer; the business class, by the merchant, the miller, the carpenter, the weaver, the dyer, and the upholsterer. The Wife of Bath represents the women of the middle class. Her face is bold and her teeth far apart and protruding. She is conspicuously dressed, with hat as "broad as is a buckler or a targe," with scarlet-red stockings, and with spurs upon her "shoes ful moiste and newe." She has a mania for pilgrimages. At the same time, she is an expert spinner and weaver, and has been attractive enough to win five husbands. Finally, the scholars are represented by a clerk of Oxford, an unworldly, hollow-cheeked man in threadbare coat, but all aglow with the new passion for learning:

"For him was levere have at his beddes heed
Twenty bokes, clad in blak or reed
Of Aristotle and his philosophye,
Than robes riche, or fithele or gay sautrye.
But al be that he was a philosophre,
Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre;
But al that he mighte of his frendes hente,
On bokes and on lerninge he it spente,
And busily gan for the soules preye
Of hem that yaf him wherwith to scoleye.

Of studie took he most cure and most hede.
Noght o word spak he more than was nede,
And that was seyde in forme and reverence,
And short and quik and ful of hy sentence;
Sowninge in moral vertu was his speche,
And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche."

"**The Knight's Tale.**"—At the suggestion of the host at the Tabard Inn, each pilgrim agrees to tell two stories on the way to Canterbury, and two returning, with the understanding that the best story-teller shall receive a free dinner at the end. Chaucer wrote, however, only twenty-four of these stories. The most interesting are *The Knight's Tale* and *The Nun's Priest's Tale*. The Knight tells the story of Palamon and Arcite, two Theban youths who have been captured by Theseus and confined in an Athenian prison. From the prison window, they see Theseus's sister, Emilie, walking in the garden, and both fall violently in love with her. Arcite is released from prison and Palamon escapes. They meet by chance in a wood and are on the point of fighting when Theseus and his train interrupt. Both lovers are at first condemned to death; but on the intercession of the women, a great tournament is arranged instead. Each lover is to appear with a hundred knights and fight for Emilie as the prize of victory. Palamon is overcome; but in the moment of victory, Arcite is thrown from his horse and mortally injured. In the end Palamon and Emilie are married.

The Nun's Priest's Tale is a quaint and humorous story of the cock and the hen. Chanticleer, the king of a poor widow's barnyard, and Pertelote, the most beautiful of his seven wives, are very learned fowls, conversant with all the literature of the Middle Ages and even of the classical past. Chanticleer has had a disturbing dream, in which a bushy-

tailed beast threatened to carry him off. Pertelote twits him for his cowardice, and, in the exact manner of the medieval schoolmen, quotes Cato to prove that dreams are of no significance. He needs to be purged; and she herself will prepare the medicine. Chanticleer replies with quotations from Macrobius, Daniel, Joseph, and others to prove the significance of dreams. Indeed, he quite overcomes poor Pertelote with arguments and citations, and scorns her laxative. The fox presently discovers himself, and after flattering Chanticleer till he is off his guard, seizes him and starts for the woods. Then the hens set up such a cry as was not heard when Troy was taken and King Priam slain. Pertelote shrieks louder than Hasdrubale's wife at the burning of Carthage, when her husband lost his life. The din arouses the widow and her daughters, who pursue the fox. The chase is joined by men with staves, by the dog, by the cow and calf, even by the very hogs, all shouting "like fiends in hell." At this crisis, Chanticleer persuades the fox to shout defiance at his pursuers and, when the fox opens his mouth to do so, escapes to a neighboring tree and is safe. The moral of the story is explained by both the cock and the fox:

"For he that winketh, whan he sholde see,
Al wilfully, God lat him never thee [thrive]!"

" 'Nay' quod the fox, 'but God give him mischaunce
That is as undiscrete of governaunce,
That jangleth whan he sholde holde his pees.' "

The fine satire of the poem can only be appreciated when the entire story is read in the original.

(c) THE RISE OF THE DRAMA

The Religious Plays. — The chief literary interest between the death of Chaucer (1400) and the birth of Shakespeare

(1564) is in the rise of the drama. The modern drama really began in the services of the medieval church. The mass itself was a kind of drama of repentance, sacrifice, and forgiveness, with the dramatic effect enhanced by the belief that the bread and wine of the communion were actually changed into the body and blood of Christ. It was altogether natural that the details should be worked up with an eye for dramatic effects. At first, in the chanting of the mass, certain tones were prolonged and grace notes added. Later, words were supplied from the Bible text appropriate to the service of the day, the birth of Christ at Christmas, for instance, or the resurrection at Easter. Individual singers took the parts of the Shepherds who came to adore the baby Christ, or represented the angel at the grave of the Saviour, or the three Marys who came early on Easter morning to see where their Lord had been laid. As time went on, complete scenes with dialogue and appropriate action were presented in the midst of the mass, helping the audience to understand the service, and adding much to the popular interest. Gradually, the scenes grew too long to be a part of the service, and the setting too large for the space around the high altar. The scenes then became separated from the mass proper and were performed by themselves, first in the aisles of the church, then at the church door, and finally, on pageant wagons drawn from place to place in the city streets. Finally, there were long series or cycles of plays representing the entire Bible story from Creation to Doomsday. The most important series in English are *The Chester Plays*, *The York Plays*, and *The Townley Plays*. These plays were exceedingly popular at the end of the fourteenth and throughout the fifteenth centuries.

The Popular Entertainments. — When the early dramas ceased to be a part of the regular church service, they had to compete with popular entertainments, and thus became

more subject to the popular taste. This taste had been fashioned by certain popular customs more or less dramatic. The old ballads, for instance, were acted in song and dance. In the May season, two young men, dressed to represent Summer and Winter, engaged in a symbolic contest, and fought till Summer won. The story of Robin Hood in dramatic form had a place in the Mayday celebration. There was also the custom of disguisings in skins of beasts and in masks representing beasts' heads. In particular, the devil with horns and tail and cloven feet was represented playing tricks upon the unwary, and executing countless buffooneries. Last of all, certain strolling entertainers performed feats of jugglery, represented little comic scenes in dialogue, and perhaps continued some of the traditions of the classical theater.

The Mystery or Miracle Play. — The plays which grew out of the church service and became known as Mystery or Miracle plays were quite different from these popular comic entertainments, but they had to be adapted to the popular demands. Since the Bible story itself was hardly suited to comic treatment, scenes which had nothing to do with the Bible had to be introduced. The first of these scenes seems to have grown up in connection with the devil, who was a character both in the popular dramatic customs and in the religious plays. The church thought of him primarily as the great principle of evil, the adversary of God and of man, strong in the battle for souls, and delighting to torture those who, through his wiles, lost their hope of bliss. But the popular imagination had changed him into a beast-demon, with horns and tail and cloven feet, exhibiting grotesque and sportive characteristics. As we have seen, he was connected with the popular customs as a player of pranks. Of course, when the devil came to be represented in the

Miracle plays, the people demanded, not the old theological devil, but their own familiar fiend. He came upon the stage with his horns and tail and cloven feet, playing his pranks, and bringing with him much of the comedy with which he had been associated in the popular customs.

The Shepherd's Play. — This comedy soon spread beyond the scenes in which devils appeared; and, in the end, elaborate comic scenes were introduced, sometimes quite incongruously. In the Shepherd's Play of the Townley series, for instance, a genuine farce is developed, a sheep-stealing episode. While the shepherds are keeping watch over their flocks a suspicious character of the neighborhood, Mak by name, approaches. The shepherds are openly distrustful of the scamp, and when they lie down to sleep, make him lie between two of the shepherds, lest he rob their flock. However, while the shepherds are sleeping, Mak contrives to escape, steals and carries home a fat wether, and creeps back unnoticed to his place between the shepherds. When the shepherds waken, they go to count their sheep, and Mak hastens home to tell his wife that the theft has been discovered and that the shepherds will soon be at hand to search the house. The two plan to put the dead sheep in a cradle and to pretend that a baby has been born. Presently the shepherds appear and search the house in vain, Mak cautioning them all the time not to waken the baby. Unfortunately for Mak, however, one of the shepherds, when on the point of leaving, regrets that he has been unjust to Mak and returns to make a little present to the baby. He pulls back the coverlet and discovers the sheep.

“Gyf me lefe hym to kys
And lyft up the clowtt.
What the devill is this?
He has a long snowte.’”

The shepherds punish Mak by tossing him in a sheet. Just as they are finishing, the angel of the Lord appears and the heavenly host sings the *Gloria in Excelsis*. The shepherds then proceed to Bethlehem to adore the Christ.

It does not seem to have occurred to the medieval mind that this crude combination was either incongruous or sacrilegious. It pleased the audience, and — a thing which is of much more importance — it introduced into the English drama the notion of double plot, a serious main plot and a comic underplot, side by side, but often quite independent.

The Morality Play. — In the course of time the Miracle plays passed beyond the control of the clergy into the hands of the trade guilds, which used them as the attractive feature of great public fairs. These occasions furnished a harvest time for thieves and scoundrels. Confidence games and all sorts of immoralities flourished. The clergy, therefore, turned against the Miracle play and introduced a new and less objectionable drama. This was the Morality play, in which abstract qualities were personified and brought upon the stage to work out some moral lesson. Virtues and vices, for instance, contended for the soul of mankind, the virtues, of course, being victorious. The best known of these plays is *Everyman*.

“After a brief prologue spoken by a *Messenger*, the action opens when Adonai, looking down upon the sinful earth, perceives how *Everyman* ‘lyveth after his own pleasure,’ as if ignoring the utter uncertainty of the tenure of human life. He therefore calls upon *Death*, his ‘mighty messengere’ to proceed to *Everyman*, and summon him to undertake a pilgrimage which he in no wise may escape, and bid him bring with him without delay a sure reckoning. *Death* delivers his message to *Everyman*, who tries in vain by pleas

and bribes to turn the summoner away. Then, having received the hint that he 'should prove his friends if he can,' to see whether any of them is so hardy as to accompany him on the journey which he must take, *Everyman*, left alone in his terror, bethinks him of appealing to his old friend *Fellowship*, his comrade in many a day of sport and play, to go with him. *Fellowship*, accosted as he passes over the stage, is full of assurances, for which he will not be thanked. But a mention of the service required soon brings a change over his professions, though he is quite at *Everyman's* service for a dinner or murder or anything of that sort. When he has departed, and *Everyman* has made a similarly futile appeal to two associates called *Kinsman* and *Cousin*, he calls to mind one other friend whom he has loved all his life, and who will surely prove true to him in his distress. *Riches* this abstraction is called; 'Property' would be the modern equivalent. . . . But although, with self-confidence of capital, *Riches* avers that there is no difficulty in the world which he cannot set straight, *Everyman's* difficulty is unfortunately not one this world can settle. He has therefore in despair to fall back upon the very last of the friends of whom he can think — his *Good-Deeds*. *Good-Deeds* answers that she is so weak that she can barely rise from the ground, where she lies cold and bound in *Everyman's* sins. Yet not only will she respond to his entreaty, but she will bring with her *Knowledge*, her sister, to help him in making 'that dredeful rekenyge.' *Knowledge*, by whom we may suppose to be meant the discreet and learned advice which religion has at her service, declares her willingness to stand by *Everyman* at the judgment seat, and meanwhile by her advice he addresses himself to *Confession*, who bestows on him a precious jewel, 'Called penannce, voyder of adversyte.'

As he begins his last journey, a mortal weakness comes over him; one after another his companions, *Beauty*, *Strength*, *Discretion*, the *Five Wits*, take their leave, *Good Deeds* shall make all sure; and that the voices of angels are even now welcoming the ransomed soul. And as an *Angel* descends to carry it heavenward, a personage called *Doctor* epitomizes the lesson which the action of the play has illustrated."

The Interlude. — Another type of play was the interlude, at first a little scene performed between the courses of a banquet, but later enlarged and developed. An example is *The Foure PP* by John Heywood, a scene in which a Potheary, a Pardoner, and a Palmer enter into a contest to determine which can tell the biggest lie. The Pedler is the judge. The Potheary tells of his wondrous cures; the Pardoner, of how he went down to hell to pardon a sinner. Each tells a lie worthy of the prize, but the Palmer wins with the following :

“Yet have I sene many a myle
And many a woman in the whyle, —
Not one good cytye, towne, nor borough
In Cristendom but I have be thorough —
And this I wolde ye shulde understande :
I have sene women a hundred thousande
And oft with them have longe tyme taryed,
Yet in all places where I have been
Of all the women that I have sene,
I never sawe nor knewe, in my consyens
Any one woman out of paciens.”

They all cry out at the magnitude of this lie, and the Pedler awards the prize to the Palmer.

Conclusion. — The Miracles, Moralities, and Interludes were the principal types of native English drama before the Renaissance. In the sixteenth century, however, the revival of learning brought into favor, especially at the schools and universities, the dramatic literature of Greece and of Rome. Plautus, Terence, and Seneca were especially popular among the cultivated classes. Gradually the influence of these dramatists affected the popular theater. In the end, the two — the drama of the schoolmen and the drama of the people — united to produce the great dramatic lit-

erature of Shakespeare's time. A discussion of this, however, belongs in the next chapter.

SUGGESTED READINGS¹

Ballads and Romances: (1) Selections from *Old English Ballads*; (2) Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, Books XIII and XVII.

Chaucer: *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*, *The Knight's Tale*, *The Nun's Priest's Tale*.

Drama: *The Second Shepherd's Play*, *Everyman*, and *Other Early Plays*. (Riverside Literature Series, No 191.)

¹ Except where special editions are mentioned, the books are to be found in the Pocket Series of English Classics, published by The Macmillan Company.

CHAPTER III

THE RENAISSANCE

The sixteenth century was a time of great intellectual activity in England; almost, if not quite, the most brilliant period in English literature. Back in the fifteenth century events had taken place which were fast transforming the intellectual life of all Europe. At first these events were more influential on the continent than in England, because the Wars of the Roses had so distracted the English people and wasted their energies that intellectual progress was almost impossible. Still, there were signs of revival even in fifteenth-century England, and at the beginning of the new century the nation was ready to yield itself with enthusiasm to all the forces of the Renaissance. The most important of these forces, as far as literature is concerned, were the rise of Humanism, the invention of printing, the discovery of the new world, and the Reformation.

Humanism is the name given to the reawakened interest in the study of the classical literature of Greece and of Rome. It began in Italy. Indeed, at the end of the fifteenth century, Italy led the world in learning. Earlier in the century, Constantinople had been the center of the Greek learning; but after the capture of the city by the Turks in 1453 Greek scholars flocked into Italy, bringing numerous Greek manuscripts with them, and spreading the influence of their learning everywhere. Copies of these manuscripts were distributed over all Europe, reaching, among other places, the English universities.

The Invention of Printing. — This humanistic movement was greatly accelerated by Gutenberg's invention of printing. Before this invention the masterpieces of literature were written out by hand on parchment or vellum, and were therefore very costly. The only books, as the term is commonly understood, were picture books called "block books," printed on coarse paper from wooden blocks. Some of the "blocks" contained words and sentences, but movable type was not used until Gutenberg invented the printing press. The method of printing from movable type was completely successful before the end of the fifteenth century, and was introduced into England by William Caxton in 1476. Printing made books much cheaper. Manuscripts were worth fifty cents a page or more, and were consequently beyond the reach of all but the most wealthy. One of Caxton's books entire could be bought for from thirty to fifty dollars. This seems high-priced to us in the days of numerous cheap editions, but the printed book was so much less expensive than manuscript that a great impetus was given to the spread of learning.

Maritime Discoveries. — The minds of men were stimulated also by a rapid series of maritime discoveries. Columbus discovered America in 1492. Almost immediately afterward Vasco da Gama rounded Africa and reached India by sea. The Cabots sailed to the mainland of North America, and brought back wonderful stories of the new continent. In 1520 Magellan sailed round the world. And to know the circumference of the earth was not all, for Copernicus discovered that the earth itself, huge as it seemed, is but an insignificant thing in the wide universe, just one of the myriad stars, and by no means the most important. All this knowledge enlarged the mind and stimulated the imagination more than we can easily realize.

The Reformation. — The Reformation, too, was a mighty

influence. Martin Luther, in Germany, insisted upon the right of the individual to think for himself, and aroused a widespread desire for a more thorough knowledge of the Scriptures in order to learn better the real grounds for the Christian faith. This inspired William Tyndale, an English clergyman, to translate the Bible into the English of his own day. Wyclif's translation had had but a limited influence, because it had circulated only in manuscript, and because the language had changed much since Wyclif's time. Tyndale's printed Bible was far more influential. The Reverend Stopford Brooke says of it: "It was this Bible which, revised by Coverdale and edited and reëdited as *Cromwell's Bible* in 1539, and again as *Cranmer's Bible*, 1540, was set up in every parish church in England. It got north into Scotland and made the Lowland English more like the London English. It passed over to the Protestant settlements in Ireland. After its revival in 1611 it went with the Puritan Fathers to New England and fixed the standard of English in America. Millions of people now speak the English of Tyndale's Bible, The King James Version, and there is no other book which has had so great an influence on the style of English literature and the standard of English Prose."

(a) NON-DRAMATIC LITERATURE

Miscellanies. — One of the first significant books showing the Renaissance influence in England is *Tottel's Miscellany*, a collection of poems published in 1557, the year before Elizabeth's accession. Many of the poems of this collection were written by Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, court poets of the time of Henry VIII, who were inspired largely by the Italian culture. Twenty-six of Wyatt's sonnets, for example, are translations from Petrarch. This miscellany was followed by many similar

collections both in poetry and prose, notably *The Mirror for Magistrates* (1559), *Paradise of Dainty Devices* (1576), and *Painter's Palace of Pleasure* (1566). These collections, especially the last, furnished Shakespeare and his contemporaries with the subject-matter for many of their famous masterpieces.

John Lyly and Sir Philip Sidney. — More important than miscellanies are John Lyly's *Euphues* and Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*. Both are prose stories, long and full of digressions. *Euphues* consists of a loose framework of story into which Lyly fits his ideas of love, friendship, education, and religion. The latter part reflects the life, the talk, and the dress of the court of Elizabeth, its fantastic and extravagant gallantry, its fanciful imitation of chivalry, its far-fetched metaphors and playing with language, its curious and gorgeous fashions in dress. The *Arcadia* is a pastoral romance, full of fine and delicate sentiment, polished and poetic, quite like its author, the noble Christian knight who was recognized as the pattern gentleman of his time. Both stories represent the new Renaissance interest in the art of writing. There is an effort to make them smooth and charming in style. They seem artificial to-day because they are so fantastic and flowery. Yet they helped to give polish to literature, and they are full of imaginative thought, which furnished much material to the poets of the time.

"The Shepherd's Calendar." — The most famous poet of the period was Edmund Spenser (1552-1599). His work represents the indirect and artificial manner of the pastoral and the allegory. His first important work, *The Shepherd's Calendar* (1579), is a conventional pastoral. The characters are spoken of as shepherds and shepherdesses, and they have the sheep and the crook, but in thought they are far from simple country people. The *Calendar* is a collection of poems,

one for each month of the year. Only five of them have to do directly with country life. The rest comprise fable, satire, allegory. One of them is in praise of the Queen. They were recognized at once as being the best poetry since Chaucer's time.

"The Faerie Queene." — Spenser's greatest work was *The Faerie Queene*, an allegory published in 1590. The poem is an allegorical romance of chivalry. In the introductory letter to Raleigh, Spenser explains that his plan is to write, in twelve books, the adventures of twelve knights, who represent the twelve virtues of Aristotle, and who contend with the opposing vices. The main hero, however, was to be Arthur, the hero of the old romances, who represents the sum of all virtues. In the end he was to be wedded to the Faerie Queene, the glory of God, to which all human act and thought aspire. The Faerie Queene also represents Queen Elizabeth. Duessa is Mary Queen of Scots. Arthur is sometimes Leicester, and sometimes Sidney. Other allegories also slip in, referring often to the events of the day. Only six of the proposed books were completed, the legends of Holiness, Temperance, Chastity, Friendship, Justice, and Courtesy. The allegory is clear in the first two books; but, as the story advances, digressions frequently appear, and the allegory becomes complicated.

It is not necessary, however, to figure out all the allegory in order to enjoy the book. The poem may be read simply for its exquisite pictures, its rich and varied imagery, the ever changing music of the verse, and, in general, the prevailing atmosphere of romance. The Reverend Stopford Brooke says of it:

"It is the poem of the noble power of the human soul struggling towards union with God, and warring against all the forms of evil; and these powers become real personages, whose lives and

battles Spenser tells in verse so musical and gliding, so delicately wrought, so rich in imaginative ornament, and so inspired with the finer life of beauty, that he has been called the poet's Poet. Descriptions like those of the House of Pride and the Mask of Cupid, and of the Months, are so vivid in form and color, that they have always made subjects for artists, while the allegorical personages are, to the very last detail, wrought out by an imagination which describes not only the general character, but the special characteristics of the Virtues or the Vices, of the Months of the year, or of the Rivers of England. In its ideal whole, the poem represents the new love of chivalry, of classical learning, the delight in mystic theories of love and religion, in allegorical schemes, in splendid spectacles and pageants, in wild adventure, the love of England, the hatred of Spain, the strange worship of the Queen, even Spenser's own new love. It takes up and uses the popular legends of fairies, dwarfs, and giants, all the machinery of the Italian epics, and mingles them up with the wild scenery of Ireland and the savages and wonders of the New World. Almost the whole spirit of the Renaissance under Elizabeth, except its coarser and baser elements, is in its pages. Of anything impure, or ugly, or violent, there is no trace. And Spenser adds to all his own sacred love of love, his own preëminent sense of the loveliness of loveliness, walking through the whole of this woven world of faerie —

‘With the moon’s beauty and the moon’s soft pace.’”

The Spenserian Stanza. — The verse form of *The Faerie Queene* was an invention of Spenser and is known as the Spenserian stanza. It consists of nine iambic lines, eight of five feet each, and the last of six feet, riming *ababbcbcc*. The following passage, relating to Morpheus, god of sleep, illustrates the meter and at the same time well exemplifies the sweetness and beauty of poetic style which is peculiarly Spenserian.

“And more to lulle him in his slumber soft,
A trickling streame from high rock tumbling downe,

And ever-drizling raine upon the loft,
Mixt with a murmuring winde, much like the sowne
Of swarming Bees, did cast him in a swowne.
No other noyse, nor people troublous cries,
As still are wont t'annoy the walled towne,
Might there be heard; but carlesse Quiet lyes
Wrapt in eternal silence farre from enimes."

Francis Bacon (1561–1626) was another distinguished literary figure. He was a man of great learning, a judge, an effective speaker in parliament, a writer of essays and philosophical treatises. Most of his philosophical work is in Latin; *The Advancement of Learning*, in both Latin and English; the *Essays*, in English alone. His fame in English literature rests largely upon the *Essays*, notably those on *Studies*, *Riches*, *Adversity*, *Friendship*, *Great Place*. His writings are not emotional and romantic like Lyly's *Euphues* and Sidney's *Arcadia*, but highly intellectual. Simplicity and directness are the prevailing attributes of his style. The following much-quoted passage from *Studies* is characteristic:

"Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention."

(b) DRAMATIC LITERATURE

The most important literature of this period is the drama. The age itself was objective, adventurous, dramatic; and naturally expressed itself in dramatic form. The theater became the center of the national life. It served as newspaper, magazine, and text book of history, as we have explained elsewhere (Part I, p. 39). Nearly every phase of life and thought was reflected in the stage plays. Never has the drama been more sensitive to the influences of real life.

Revival of Classical Drama in the Schools. — Humanism had its part to play in this dramatic development. During the Middle Ages the traditions of the classical drama had been practically obliterated. The manuscripts of the Greek and of the Latin plays were well-nigh forgotten, hidden away, as they were, in the libraries of the monasteries, and seldom read. But with the revival of learning, these plays were brought to light and carefully studied in the monasteries and schools. It was found that a good way to teach Latin to boys was to have them present, in Latin, scenes from Plautus and Terence, or act dramatized versions of stories like that of the Prodigal Son. Thus originated "the drama of the schools," founded upon classical models.

"Ralph Roister Doister." — The first play in English on the classical models is generally supposed to be *Ralph Roister Doister* (1552 or 1553). It was written by Nicholas Udall, a schoolmaster, to be acted by the boys of Eton School. It was full of horse-play of the kind the boys certainly delighted in acting. Ralph, the central figure, is a conceited simpleton upon whom Merrygreeke and others play numerous tricks. Ralph wishes to marry a rich widow, and writes her a love letter. But Merrygreeke changes the punctuation and reads the letter to the lady in such a way as to alter the entire meaning. The widow becomes angry; but Ralph persists in his suit. Finally, annoyed beyond endurance, she arms her maidens with broomsticks and other household articles, and drives him away in great discomfiture. The play is written on the model of the comedies of Plautus. It furnished English playwrights an excellent example of rapid dialogue and clearly constructed plot.

"Gammer Gurton's Needle," another early comedy, is a more realistic picture of English peasant life.

"Gammer Gurton is patching the leather breeches of her man Hodge, when Gib, the cat, gets into the milkpan. While Gammer chases the cat the family needle is lost, a veritable calamity in those days. The whole household is turned upside down and the neighbors are dragged into the affair. Various comical situations are brought about by Diccon, a thieving vagabond, who tells Gammer that her neighbor, Dame Chatte, has taken her needle, and who then hurries to tell Dame Chatte that she is accused by Gammer of stealing a favorite rooster. Naturally there is a terrible row when the irate old women meet and misunderstand each other. Diccon also drags Doctor Rat, the curate, into the quarrel by telling him that, if he will but creep into Dame Chatte's cottage by a hidden way, he will find her using the stolen needle. Then Diccon secretly warns Dame Chatte that Gammer Gurton's man Hodge is coming to steal her chickens; and the old woman hides in the dark passage and cudgels the curate soundly with the door bar. All the parties are finally brought before the justice, when Hodge suddenly and painfully finds the lost needle — which is all the while stuck in his leather breeches — and the scene ends uproariously for both audience and actors."

"**Gorboduc.**" — The first English tragedy along classical lines was *Gorboduc*, written by Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton. It was acted in 1561(2) at the Inner Temple, the London law school to which the authors belonged. The story is similar to that of *King Lear*. The outline follows:

"Gorboduc, king of Brittain, divided his realme in his lifetime to his sonnes, Ferrex and Porrex; the sonnes fell to discention; the yonger killed the elder; the mother, that more dearely loved the elder, for revenge killed the yonger; the people, moved by the crueltie of the fact, rose in rebellion and slew both father and mother; the nobility assembled and most terribly destroyed the rebels; and after wardes, for want of issue of the prince, whereby the succession of the crowne became uncertaine, they fell to civil warre, in which both they and many of their issues were slain, and the land for a long time almost desolate and miserably wasted."

The plan of the play follows the classical rules of Seneca. Blood flows profusely, but not a drop is shed upon the stage. Messengers relate the bloody deeds, and choruses comment upon them.

The Chronicle History Play. — The influence of the classical drama was for some time confined to the schools and universities. The plays performed by professional actors in the inn-yards and, after 1576, in theater buildings, followed native traditions. The popularity of the old Miracle play had waned; but the new Chronicle History play preserved the old dramatic traditions. The only important change was to substitute English history for Bible history. Examples of the Chronicle History play are *The First part of the Contention betwixt the two famous houses of Yorke and Lancaster*, *The True Tragedie of Richard, Duke of Yorke*, and *The Famous Victories of Henry V*. These plays are remarkable, not for their intrinsic merits, but because the first two formed the basis of the three parts of *Henry VI*, attributed to Shakespeare, and the third furnished suggestions for Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, Parts I and II, and *Henry V*. Compared with Shakespeare's work, they seem very crude indeed.

The Drama of Blood. — The same popular dramatic methods were used in putting on the stage every new murder or scandal and all the thrilling Italian and Spanish stories which now began to crowd the London bookstalls. A veritable drama of blood grew up, very crude in form, glutting the people with horrors. Unlike *Gorboduc*, these popular tragedies presented all the bloodshed on the stage. The people demanded the representation of the deed itself. A mere account of it by a messenger was too tame.

"The Spanish Tragedy." — The most popular of these dramas was, perhaps, *The Spanish Tragedy*, by Thomas Kyd,

who is also supposed to have written the first play on the Hamlet story. The outline of *The Spanish Tragedy* reveals its general character. Andrea, a Spanish nobleman, is sent to claim tribute from the king of Portugal. War arises and Andrea is slain. His friend Horatio captures the Portuguese prince, Belthazar, and returns to Spain. Here Horatio falls in love with Bel-Imperia, formerly the lady love of Andrea, and is beloved by her in return; but her brother Lorenzo, a court villain of the blackest stamp, wishing her to marry Belthazar, murders Horatio and hangs him to a tree in his father's garden. Here Hieronimo, the father, discovers the body of his son, and vows the rest of his life to vengeance upon the assassin. A play is devised at court in which Lorenzo and Belthazar take part. At the close Hieronimo and Bel-Imperia stab the two traitors and afterwards put an end to their own lives. In this play there are six murders, three executions, two deaths in combat, and three suicides. The popular playwright cared little for the restraint of the classical drama.

The Popular Drama and the Drama of the Schools. — There was thus a marked contrast between the popular drama and the drama of the scholars. The popular playwrights scorned what they considered the stupid pedantry in the plays of the schoolmen, and the tedious description and disquisition. The scholars, in turn, scoffed, not without reason, at the rustic buffooneries and profuse bloodshed in which the popular writers seemed to delight. The schoolmen represented art without life; the popular playwrights, life without art. There was also a contrast in dramatic method. When the popular playwright wished to dramatize a story, he took it up at the beginning and by a series of scenes with changes of time, place, and action, developed it gradually to its climax and catastrophe. The schoolman,

on the contrary, had a tendency to hit at once upon the crisis or catastrophe, and to present only that confined to one time and place, bringing out what had happened before or elsewhere by a messenger, who relates it, or by the chorus, which reflects upon it. The schoolmen tried to force upon the popular playwrights the methods of the ancient dramatists. They pointed out the irregularities and inconsistencies of the popular dramas and laughed at their lack of art.¹ The playwrights, however, cared little for this. They had the ear of the people and would not put up with the restraints and limitations of classical art. The real dramatic problem of the time was to take what was best in each of these schools — the art of the one and the vigorous life of the other — and unite them into enduring drama. This was accomplished by Marlowe, Shakespeare, and their contemporaries.

Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593) was the son of a shoemaker, but he had the advantages of university life at Cambridge, and when he came up to London to write plays for the public stage, he brought with him a knowledge of classical dramatic art. He was forced to write in the popular style or starve. Yet he saw the weaknesses of the popular style and began at once to modify it. To the rambling stories he gave a more definite unity than had before been attempted. He always came to his work with some great central idea to express, some master passion to delineate. In *Tamburlaine*, it is the thirst for unlimited power, the inordinate desire of a man in the lowest rank of life for the honors of an absolute throne. In *Doctor Faustus*, it is the scholar's desire for more than mortal knowledge, "the climbing after knowledge infinite," even at the risk of his immortal soul. In *The Jew of Malta*, it is the inordinate desire for gold — not the sordid vice of avarice,

¹ See Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie*.

but a passion lifted by the imagination into the realm of poetry. In *Edward II*, it is again the thirst for power, an overmastering passion which cares not to count the cost. The same audacity that made Tamburlaine say,

“I’ll mount the top with my aspiring wings
Although my downfall be the darkest hell,”

the same recklessness that made Faustus exclaim,

“Had I as many souls as there be stars
I’d give them all for Mephitopholis,”

led Mortimer in *Edward II* to hazard everything for the throne, and to say at last when retribution came upon him,

“Base fortune now I see that in thy wheel
There is a point, to which, when men aspire,
They tumble headlong down; that point I touch’d
And seeing there was no place to mount higher
Why should I grieve at my declining fall?”

Passion Interest. — The passion interest is often extravagant. Tamburlaine, “scourging kingdoms with his conquering sword,” is sometimes absurd. The atrocities of the Jew of Malta are quite inhuman. Yet to unify the action about one central theme was a distinct dramatic gain; and in his grand way Marlowe was sometimes very effective. Charles Lamb says of the catastrophe scene in *Edward II*, where the King, standing in the “mire and puddle” of the dungeon of Berkeley Castle, gazes into the eyes of his murderer with the fine spirit of the Plantagenets: “This scene moves pity and terror beyond any scene ancient or modern with which I am familiar.”

Characterization. — Some of the characters lack individuality. Tamburlaine is just the incarnation of brute force. The Jew of Malta is not a real Jew; he is only the personi-

fication of the popular hatred of the Jew. There is no humanity about him as there is about Shakespeare's Shylock. Even Dr. Faustus is not strongly individualized. Yet Faustus is after all a fine type of medieval rebel, pursuing the path of forbidden knowledge with unholy ardor. Mortimer, in *Edward II*, reminds us a little of Shakespeare's Hotspur. And Edward II reveals, in the end, a distinct personality, weak in many ways, it is true, but with the genuine dignity and strength of kingship behind all the folly and caprice. Marlowe's characters lack the delicate, refining touches of finished work; but they are colossal figures, grandly conceived and magnificently executed.

Marlowe's Blank Verse. — Marlowe also did much for the development of blank verse. The schoolmen had employed lines of ten syllables without rime since the time *Gorboduc* was written, but their failure to produce varied and rhythmical verse was conspicuous. There was not the jingle of the recurring rime, but each line stood awkwardly in its place, stiff, monotonous, isolated. Marlowe made the thought flow on from line to line unimpeded; balanced phrase against phrase; built up periods as in prose; and by a variety of cadences gave to the verse a changing melody. Some of his later lines would not seem out of place in Shakespeare.

Periods of Shakespeare's Work. — Shakespeare carried on and developed the Marlowe tradition, adding to dignity and strength, delicacy and humor. The year 1600 divides Shakespeare's work almost exactly in the middle. For ten or twelve years before, and for ten or twelve years after 1600, he was closely connected with the London public theater both as playwright and actor. These two periods in turn divide themselves almost equally, making four well-defined periods in the development of Shakespeare's art as a dramatist. The first period was a time of apprenticeship

and experiment, when he was working out from under the influence of other men, and feeling his way along new lines of dramatic work. *The Comedy of Errors* and *Richard III* belong to this period. Professor Dowden characterizes this time by the catch phrase "In the Workshop." During the second period (1595-1601) Shakespeare was enlarging his experience of the world, delighting in its pageantry, analyzing its forces, formulating its laws, and learning to express himself with freedom of style and mastery of dramatic form. It is the great objective period of the poet's life. Professor Dowden characterizes it by the phrase "In the World." Here belong *Henry IV* and *As You Like It* as typical plays. In the third period (1601-1608) Shakespeare was concerned with the deeper experiences of life, not the pageantry of the world without, but the problems of the world within. He wrestled with the problem of the inner life, the motives for conduct, the passions of the human heart. Professor Dowden calls this period "Out of the Depths." To it belong the great tragedies, of which *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* are examples. In the fourth period (1608-1612) the poet worked away from this dark and somber tragedy, from experiences of questioning and tumult and passion, into a serene philosophic calm. "On the Heights" is Professor Dowden's phrase for this period. Typical plays are *The Tempest* and *Winter's Tale*. "In the Workshop," "In the World," "Out of the Depths," "On the Heights"; apprenticeship, objective experience, subjective analysis, philosophic serenity — this represents a bird's-eye view of Shakespeare's mental development. The following table classifies the poet's works according to the four periods:

First Period, Early Experiment. *Venus and Adonis*, *Rape of Lucrece*, 1594; *Titus Andronicus*, *Henry VI* (three parts), 1590-1591; *Love's Labour's Lost*, 1590; *Comedy of*

Errors, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, 1591-1592; *Richard III*, 1593; *Richard II*, *King John*, 1594-1595; *Sonnets*, 1593-1598.

Second Period, Development. *Romeo and Juliet*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1595; *Merchant of Venice*, *Henry IV* (first part), 1596; *Henry IV* (second part), *Merry Wives of Windsor*, 1597; *Much Ado About Nothing*, 1598; *As You Like It*, *Henry V*, 1599.

Third Period, Maturity and Gloom. *Twelfth Night*, 1600; *Taming of the Shrew*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Hamlet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, 1601-1602; *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, 1603; *Othello*, 1604; *King Lear*, 1605; *Macbeth*, 1606; *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Timon of Athens*, 1607.

Fourth Period, Philosophic Serenity. *Coriolanus*, *Pericles*, 1608; *Cymbeline*, 1609; *Winter's Tale*, 1610-1611; *The Tempest*, 1611; *Henry VIII*.

Shakespeare was not a genius who wrote as well at the beginning as at the end of his career. He had to learn his art just as other men do. He learned, however, through experiment and not by writing from models; for with the exception of some of Marlowe's work he had in the plays then in vogue in the public theaters only crude models to work from, and the classical plays of the schools were not adapted to the popular taste. His work was to develop dramatic types which were both successful stage plays and pieces of literary art. The principal Shakespearean types are history, comedy, and tragedy. All three existed in a crude form when he began to write for the stage. He developed each to a high degree of perfection.

The History Play, or, more strictly, the Chronicle History play, never shook off the older conventional form, even under Shakespeare's hand. The serious main plot and the comic underplot remained side by side without a connection



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PORTIA.

After the painting by John Everett Millais.

vital enough to give real dramatic unity to the play as a whole; and the dialogue in the serious main plot never became acting dialogue in a true dramatic sense; to the end, it retained its narrative and oratorical qualities. Yet instead of the tedious narrative, bombastic declamation, and crude buffoonery of the early plays, Shakespeare developed brilliant oratory and spirited declamation in the main plot, and a genuine comedy of manners in the underplot. The portrayal of character, too, finds full development. Henry V is Shakespeare's ideal man of action. Falstaff is still considered the greatest comic character in literature.

Comedy had existed before Shakespeare as a distinct dramatic type in the plays of John Lyly, with their clever dialogue; in the mask entertainments of the court, full of dancing and singing; and in the classical comedies like *Ralph Roister Doister*, notable for their comic situations. Shakespeare doubled the complications of the classical dramas in his *Comedy of Errors*; utilized all the mask effects in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*; and, in such plays as *Twelfth Night* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, developed the type known as Romantic Comedy, employing all the sources of comic effect in genuinely clever dialogue, well-conceived situations, and carefully constructed plots.

Tragedy. — The drama of blood was elevated by Shakespeare into real tragedy. In his plays, the emphasis is no longer upon the shedding of blood for the mere horror of it, but upon the motives for action which lie deep in the passionate heart. He treats the very essence of tragedy in the struggle between the individual and his surroundings, the conflict between will and fate, the strife between the "musts" and the "can'ts" in human life. (See Part I, p. 46.) When the individual will says, "I must," and the external forces of life say, "You can't," we have the basis for the tragic

clash which Shakespeare made his plays interpret. *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, and *King Lear* are not mere dramas of blood, but very searching interpretations of life.

Ben Jonson's Tragedies. — Ben Jonson (1573?–1637) was Shakespeare's greatest contemporary and rival. He was of humble birth, but he had more schooling than Shakespeare, and became, in the end, the most learned dramatist of the time. He set himself against what he considered the imaginative extravagance of his contemporaries and cultivated the restraint of the classicists. In tragedy, particularly, he took up the line of development which had been begun in *Gorboduc* and tried to convert the popular drama to the ideas of Seneca. *Sejanus* and *Cataline* are his important historical tragedies. They are very learned; they are scrupulously accurate in the matter of historical details; they conform in general to the classical "unities." The characters, however, are not so genuinely human as are Shakespeare's men and women. The style is not so direct and strong.

Jonson's Comedies. — Jonson's best comedies are: *Everyman in his Humour*, *The Silent Woman*, *Volpone*, *The Alchemist*, and *Bartholomew Fair*. They illustrate "the comedy of humors." The author seizes upon some eccentricity of character, some peculiar trait of human nature, and emphasizes that, neglecting the natural complexities of character. *Volpone*, for example, is a study of avarice; *The Alchemist*, a study of quackery. *The Silent Woman* is particularly noteworthy. The leading character's special peculiarity or "humor" is a horror of noise. This person, Morose by name, lives in a street too narrow to admit carriages; he pads the door; he puts mattresses on the stairs; he forces his servants to go about in thick stockings. In a hasty moment, he resolves to marry in order to keep

his money away from a nephew, Eugenie, whom he dislikes. He believes his wife to be a rare silent woman ; but she finds her voice immediately after the marriage, talks loudly, reforms the household, and drives Morose in distraction to the garret. Morose finally agrees to give the nephew £500 a year to be released from his torment. The silent woman turns out to be a boy in disguise. The play is full of bright, quick movement and splendid fun.

Jonson's Masks.—Jonson was also famous as a writer of masks. They were performed mostly before the court of James I at Whitehall. Mythological and allegorical scenes were presented with magnificent costuming and against a background of elaborate scenery designed by the court architect, Inigo Jones. The best of these masks are *The Masque of Beauty*, *The Hue and Cry after Cupid*, and *The Masque of Queens*.

Thomas Heywood was a dramatist of whose life as a writer little is known except that it was long, extending from the time of Marlowe to the closing of the theaters in 1642. He has been called a "dramatic journalist," because he tried to do through the drama what is now accomplished through the newspaper and the lecture. His most famous play is a drama of simple domestic life, *A Woman killed with Kindness*. Domestic life mixed with adventure is exemplified in *The Fair Maid of the West*; it contains pictures of life in an English seaport town and some spirited, melodramatic sea fighting.

Beaumont and Fletcher.—Francis Beaumont (1584–1616) and John Fletcher (1579–1625) worked together; over fifty plays bear their joint names. Both were high born and well educated, though not classicists in the sense that Ben Jonson was. The partnership worked so well that the critics have not been able to determine exactly what

part of the work is Beaumont's and what part Fletcher's. The most that can be said is that Beaumont seems to have had the deeper and more serious imagination and a greater power of dramatic construction. Fletcher's gifts were lyric sweetness and sentiment and a fluency of style. *Philaster* is their most famous joint product. It treats of a jealous lover and a faithful lady love, who follows him in the disguise of a page. The play is thoroughly romantic in tone.

"The Faithful Shepherdess." — Beaumont died in 1616, leaving Fletcher to work on alone until 1625. Of the plays which Fletcher wrote alone, *The Faithful Shepherdess* is the most noteworthy. It is a pastoral play of rare beauty. The songs are particularly exquisite. Milton took from this play many hints for his *Comus*.

Middleton and Webster. — Thomas Middleton (1570?–1627) and John Webster reverted to the old "tragedy of blood" in the style of Kyd and Marlowe. Shakespeare had lifted this type into real spiritual tragedy in such plays as *King Lear* and *Hamlet*, but Middleton and Webster did not maintain Shakespeare's high standard. They relied, for the most part, upon the mere physical horror of the graveyard and the madhouse. Middleton's *Changeling*, his best-known play, is sensational and repulsive. The situations are unnatural and do violence to the moral sense. Webster's greatest plays, *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi*, are crowded with physical horrors. In spite of Middleton's mastery of language and Webster's power of conceiving character, in spite of occasional fine outbursts of poetry on the part of each, their plays show clearly the dramatic decadence which soon went from bad to worse in the plays of Ford, Massinger, and Shirley.

Conclusion. — Indeed, after the death of Shakespeare, the drama shows a steady decline. This was partly due to the

Puritan opposition, and partly the cause of that opposition. In Shakespeare's time, in spite of the patronage of Elizabeth, the Puritans had been able to keep the theaters outside the city limits of London. And after the accession of James, when the court became more corrupt and the Puritans more aggressive, the theater became the victim of the changing age. More and more it had to make its appeal to the increasingly corrupt taste of the court, and consequently the Puritan opposition became even more justifiable and more effective. The theaters were closed in 1642, and not opened again until the restoration of the Stuarts in 1660.

SUGGESTED READINGS¹

Spenser: *The Faerie Queene*, Book I.

Bacon: *Essays*.

Palgrave: *Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics*, Book I.

Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Henry IV* (first part), *Henry V*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*.

Fletcher: *The Faithful Shepherdess*. (The Temple Dramatists.)

¹ Except where special editions are mentioned, the books are to be found in the Pocket Series of English Classics published by The Macmillan Company.

CHAPTER IV

THE PURITAN AGE

The Puritan Age. — The years which followed the death of Shakespeare were years of national division, controversy, and conflict. Elizabeth had ruled firmly but wisely, and had kept her people reasonably well united and loyal. King James, however, was of a different temperament: ridiculous, cowardly, tyrannical. He insisted at all times upon the doctrine of the divine right of kings, maintaining that the people had no right to interfere with his actions, however unjust those actions might be. He and his son, Charles I, came into sharp conflict with the leaders of the people, especially with the Puritans. The different views of life represented by the court party and the Puritan party had been marked even in Elizabeth's time. In the time of James and Charles the two parties came into open conflict, resulting in civil war (1642–1648). The Puritans under Oliver Cromwell were victorious, Charles I was beheaded, and the Stuart family was driven into exile. Such troublesome times are not favorable to great literature.

The Cavalier Poets. — There were three classes of people in the state, however, whose ideas of life found their way into literature: the court party, the party of the established church, and the Puritan party. To the court party belonged the so-called Cavalier poets, lyric poets who wrote in a light, fanciful vein on rather trivial subjects. The most important

of these poets were Carew, Suckling, and Lovelace. A characteristic example of their poetry is Lovelace's *To Althea from Prison*. The first and last stanzas follow :

“ When love with unconfined wings
 Hovers within my gates,
 And my divine Althea brings
 To whisper at the grates ;
 When I lie tangled in her hair
 And fetter'd to her eye,
 The Gods that wanton in the air
 Know no such liberty
 * * * * *
 Stone walls do not a prison make,
 Nor iron bars a cage ;
 Minds innocent and quiet take
 That for an hermitage ;
 If I have freedom in my love
 And in my soul am free,
 Angels alone, that soar above,
 Enjoy such liberty.”

Robert Herrick (1591–1674) may also be classified with the Cavalier poets, though he was also a religious poet and a poet of Nature. The *Litany* is his famous religious poem, somber and melancholy in tone ; *Corinna's Maying* is his most notable lyric of country life. His lighter verse, which links him to the Cavalier group, is well illustrated by his *Counsel to Young Girls*.

“ Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
 Old Time is still a-flying.
 And this same flower that smiles to-day
 To-morrow will be dying.

“ The glorious Lamp of Heaven, the Sun,
 The higher he's a-getting

The sooner will his race be run
And nearer he's to setting.

"The age is best which is the first,
When youth and blood are warmer,
But being spent, the worse, and worst
Times, still succeed the former.

"Then be not coy, but use your time;
And while ye may, go marry:
For having lost but once your prime,
You may forever tarry."

The Metaphysical School. — Light and fanciful lyric poetry, however, did not represent the prevailing mood of the age. The chief interest was in religion of a mystical and melancholy kind. The literature of both the Anglicans and the Puritans represent it, though the Puritan habit of mind was not distinctly literary. Among the religious poets, the most important were Donne, Herbert, and Vaughan. With these may be classed Crashaw, a Roman Catholic. John Donne was the Dean of St. Paul's in London, a preacher of power, and a poet with flashes of genius. "His poetry is full of strange, interrupted music and of vivid passion which breaks in jets and flashes through a veil of obscure thought and tortured imagery. In these moments of illumination, it becomes wonderfully poignant and direct, heart-searching in its simple human accents, with an originality and force for which we look in vain among the clear and fluent melodies of Elizabethan lyrics."¹ The ordinary reader, however, finds Donne obscure. His poetry is full of fanciful conceits, strained metaphors, and difficult comparisons. So intellectually subtle is the style that Dr. Johnson nicknamed Donne and his followers "the metaphysical school."

¹ Moody and Lovett, *A History of English Literature*, p. 144.

Herbert and Crashaw. — The greatest of Donne's followers were George Herbert (1593–1632) and Richard Crashaw (1613?–1650?). Herbert's poetry is prevailingly intellectual, though of earnest and sincere piety; Crashaw's is ecstatic and mystical. Crashaw had the religious fervor of the Middle Ages, and the controversies of the seventeenth century naturally drove him back to the mother church. His most characteristic poems are *The Flaming Heart* and *Hymn to Saint Theresa*. Herbert was a typical church of England man. His volume of poems, *The Temple*, reflects the prevailing spiritual agitation and melancholy of the seventeenth century. *The Gifts of God* is one of his most notable poems:

“When God at first made Man,
Having a glass of blessings standing by;
Let us (said He) pour on him all we can:
Let the world's riches, which disperséd lie,
Contract into a span.

“So strength first made a way;
Then beauty flow'd, then wisdom, honor, pleasure;
When almost all was out, God made a stay,
Perceiving that alone, of all his treasure,
Rest in the bottom lay.

“For if I should (said He)
Bestow this jewel also on My creature,
He would adore My gifts instead of Me,
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature,
So both should losers be.

“Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlessness,
Let him be rich and weary, that at least,
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss him to My breast.”

Abraham Cowley (1618–1667) also requires mention in connection with the “metaphysical school.” His contemporaries considered him the greatest of poets, though posterity has not confirmed the judgment. *The Mistress*, a series of love poems, and *Davideis*, an heroic poem of King David of Israel, were once famous, but are now rarely read. He was much quoted, however, in the Classical Age; and he gave his name to the verse form known as the “Cowleyan Ode,” “a series of verse groups of unequal length and irregular structure,” adapted from the old Pindaric ode.

Burton’s “Anatomy of Melancholy.” — Among the prose writers, the most important were Robert Burton (1577–1640), Jeremy Taylor (1613–1667), and Sir Thomas Browne (1605–1682). Robert Burton’s famous book, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, analyzes the prevailing national mood as a disease. It discusses the causes, the manifestations, and the cure of melancholy. Part I treats a somewhat heterogeneous list of causes: (1) God, (2) spirits, devils, etc., (3) witches and magicians, (4) old age, (5) heredity, (6) bad diet, (7) idleness, (8) anger, (9) ambition, (10) study, etc. Part II discusses the treatment of these various causes. Part III is devoted entirely to the causes and cures of love melancholy.

Jeremy Taylor. — Taylor’s most influential work was *Holy Living and Holy Dying*, a noble and tolerant book widely read both in Taylor’s own day and since. Hazlitt says of it: “It is a divine pastoral. He writes to the faithful followers of Christ as a shepherd pipes to his flock. . . . He makes life a procession to the grave, but crowns it with garlands, and rains sacrificial roses on its path.” Taylor has been called “the Shakespeare of divines,” and “a kind of Spenser in a cassock.” His style is richly poetic and melodious, though often over-fanciful and diffuse.

Sir Thomas Browne: "*Religio Medici*" — Sir Thomas Browne is known chiefly for his *Religio Medici*, an expression of his own personal religious beliefs. The book is melancholy and mystical, like most other books of the period. "He (Browne) loves to stand before the face of the Eternal and the Infinite until the shows of life fade away, and he is filled with a passionate quietude and humility." His grand and solemn style is at times very impressive. Some modern readers, however, consider it "desultory and magniloquent."

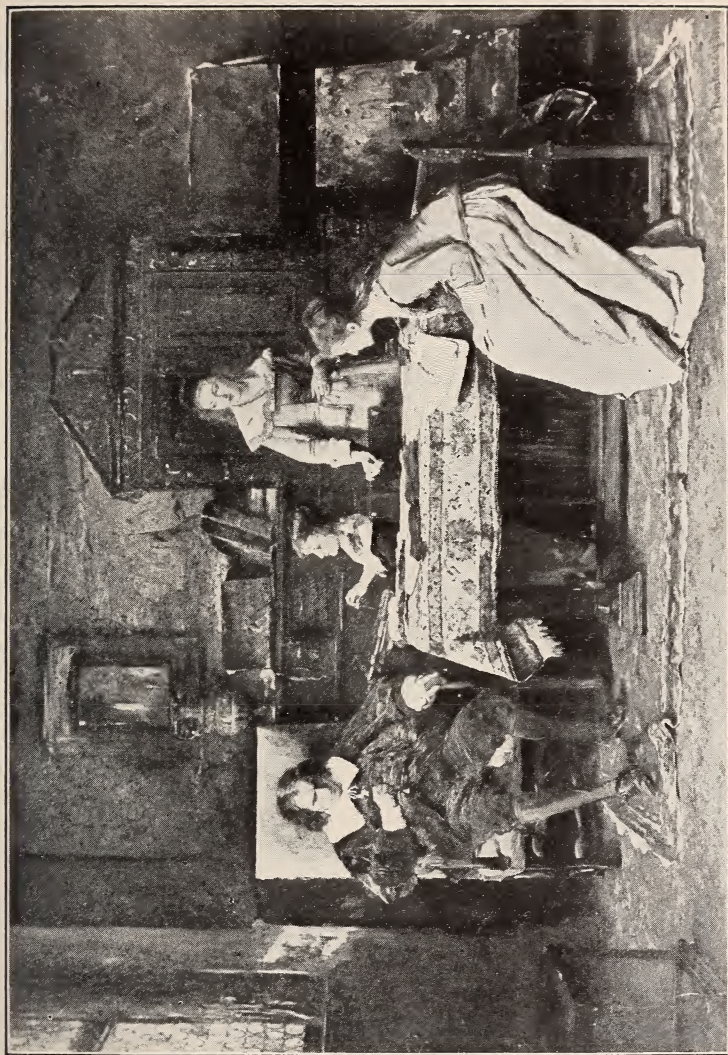
Walton's "The Compleat Angler." — Isaak Walton (1593–1683) is a writer who defies classification. Instead of discussing melancholy, like most of his contemporaries, he found a practical cure for it. He went fishing. His book, *The Compleat Angler*, has no touches of melancholy. The book begins in the form of conversations between a falconer, a hunter, and an angler; but the falconer soon drops out of the story, and the angler, true to nature, does most of the talking. The style is charming, showing a close and sympathetic observation of woods and fields and streams, a love of simple and wholesome pleasures, and a kindliness of spirit as delightful as it is rare. The angler says, "I envy not him that eats better meat than I do; nor him that is richer, or that wears better clothes than I do; I envy nobody but him, and him only, that catches more fish than I do." This book seems out of place in the seventeenth century.

The Puritans. — The stern temper of the Puritan mind would seem antagonistic to literature; yet two of the most widely known writers of the time were Puritans. Milton and Bunyan are still read by people who hardly know the names of the other writers of the period. Macaulay has pointed out that Milton's cast of mind was not strictly Puritan. He belonged to the Puritan faith, and had the

intense religious enthusiasm and exaltation of the Puritans; but he was "perfectly free from the contagion of their frantic delusions, their savage manners, their ludicrous jargon, their scorn of science, and their aversion to pleasure." He hated tyranny, but he possessed the mental graces of the Cavalier. His tastes were refined; his sense of the value of literature strong. He united in himself the virtues of the Puritan and the graces of the cavalier.

Milton's First Period.—Milton's work naturally divides itself into three periods: (1) the period before the outbreak of civil war in 1642; (2) the period of the Revolution and the Commonwealth from 1642-1660, and (3) the period immediately following the restoration of the Stuarts in 1660. To the first period belong the Minor Poems, notably *L' Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Comus*, and *Lycidas*. After receiving his degree from Cambridge, Milton retired to a country place at Horton, and devoted himself to the pursuit of poetry. The graceful and charming qualities of his mind here found free play. *L' Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* represent two moods of the poet, the keen delight in mirth of a light yet wholesome character, and the more serious delight in reflection, music, and religious musing. *Comus*, a mask, shows also the brighter side of Milton's character, the side which is least Puritanic.

Lycidas is universally considered one of his most finished poems. It is a lament for the death of a college acquaintance, Edward King, who was drowned in the Irish Channel. Its literary form is the conventional pastoral. Milton and King are represented as shepherds who tend their sheep and play rustic music. But the poem is not intended to represent real country life; it is only a translation of the experience of the two into pastoral imagery. For instance when Milton says:



MILTON DICTATING "PARADISE LOST."
After the painting by Michael Munkacsy.

“For we were nursed upon the self-same hill
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade and rill,”

he means that he and King went to college together (Christ's College, Cambridge) and engaged in the same studies and pursuits. Every detail in the poem does not have a hidden meaning, but the conventional pastoral imagery is used in a general way to express the experience of the two men. Milton also expresses in the poem his idea of the state of literature and of the church. The poem also illustrates the rich color and varied music of Milton's early verse.

The Second Period. “*Areopagitica*.” — During the second period, Milton wrote no poetry except occasional sonnets, for much of his time was occupied with political controversies. He held the position of Secretary for Foreign Tongues under the Puritan government. Most of his official writing was in Latin. Only occasionally did he produce a piece of genuine English prose literature. Such is the *Areopagitica*, a vigorous plea for freedom of the press, written in an elaborate, highly figurative, and melodious style. As a whole this period of Milton's life has comparatively little literary significance. The writing of one of his controversial pamphlets made him blind.

The Third Period. — To the third period belong *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*. *Samson Agonistes* is a tragedy in the Greek manner, based on the story in the sixteenth chapter of Judges. *Paradise Regained* treats of Christ's temptation in the wilderness (Matthew iv). Neither of them equals in importance *Paradise Lost*, Milton's greatest achievement.

“**Paradise Lost.**” — From boyhood, Milton felt himself dedicated to the task of writing a great literary masterpiece, and the theme of *Paradise Lost* was in his mind for many years. At first he thought of making a drama of it and

sketched out a plan on the Greek model; but this idea was abandoned for the epic form before he had written much on the theme. *Paradise Lost* is one of the greatest poems in the English language. To be sure, the idea of the universe with the earth in the center, surrounded by a series of concentric spheres in which the planets and stars are fixed, is totally wrong, as possibly Milton knew; but the poem remains great because its imagination is so wonderful and its verse so nearly perfect. Milton thought his minor poems were nothing but literary exercises compared with *Paradise Lost*. Of this poem he thought highly, though he aimed to be satisfied with nothing short of perfection. No one since has been able to sustain so grand a style.

A Literary Epic. — *Paradise Lost* is a literary epic like Virgil's *Æneid*, as distinguished from a popular epic like *The Iliad* or *Beowulf*. It is not simple story, not a direct picture of life. Milton has a problem to discuss. He says:

"What in me is dark
Illumine; what is low raise and support;
That to the highth of this great argument
I may assert Eternal Providence
And justify the ways of God to men."

The poem is a great artist's idea about the problem of evil in the world. It treats the revolt of Satan and the angels from God; their overthrow and the casting of them into Hell; their plan of revenge by corrupting man, whom God had created and placed in paradise; the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve; and the expulsion from paradise. At the end the outcasts are comforted by the promise of atonement through the coming of Christ. Adam is the hero; but Satan is the more interesting character, perhaps because he is more human.

The Greatness of the Poem. — The poem is conceived and executed on a grand scale. The scene of the action comprises heaven, hell, and the entire universe between. The characters are God, the angels, fallen spirits, and man. The imagery is vivid and sublime; the flow of the verse, stately and harmonious. The lasting interest in the poem lies in the colossal images, exalted thought, and wonderful melody.

"Pilgrim's Progress." — John Bunyan (1628–1688) was another Puritan who wrote enduring literature. He was a tinker by trade, and had little or no education; but he knew his Bible almost by heart, and was an artist by instinct. His religious experience was exceedingly vivid and dramatic. Intense religious feeling, vital imagination, and a thorough knowledge of the simple style of the Bible made him a great writer. *Pilgrim's Progress* is one of the most perfect allegories ever written. All the difficulties and triumphs of the Christian life are here represented in story. At the beginning, Christian sets out from the city of Destruction to make his way to the Holy City. He carries on his back the burden of his sins and fears. Evangelist tells him the way to go and he pushes onward in spite of the petitions of his family, his neighbors, and his friends. Scene after scene follows, picturing spiritual experiences. Christian falls into the Slough of Despond, travels into the Valley of Humiliation, climbs the Hill of Difficulty, has a fight with the demon Apollyon, is thrown along with Hopeful into the dungeon of Doubting Castle by Giant Despair. At length, after many difficulties, he comes to the city of All Delight, where he is welcomed by a company of angels that come singing down the street. *Pilgrim's Progress* has been translated into seventy-five languages and dialects, and has perhaps been more widely read than any other book in the English language except the Bible.

SUGGESTED READINGS ¹

Palgrave: *Golden Treasury*, Book II.

Walton: *The Compleat Angler*. (Everyman's Library.)

Milton: *L' Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, Lycidas, Sonnets, Paradise Lost*, Books I and II.

Bunyan: *Pilgrim's Progress*.

¹ Except where special editions are mentioned, the books are to be found in the Pocket Series of English Classics published by The Macmillan Company.

CHAPTER V

CLASSICISM

Characteristics of the Age. — The restoration of the Stuarts in 1660 brought a strong reaction against Puritanism. The upper classes, especially, had grown weary of the Puritanic restraints, and quickly adopted the new ideas, new fashions, and new moral standards which the gay court of Charles II introduced from France. In their hatred of hypocrisy and cant they went even further: they set aside not only the restraints of Puritanism, but also all that is emotional, mysterious, and vital in religion. Decent conformity to a conventional religion was all that could be asked. Many rejected the personal God with whom the Puritan had communed face to face, and made for themselves a god by means of the reason alone, neglecting the revelations of the Bible. These deists, as they were called, belonged to the established English church, but they defended the church, not on the ground that it represented the true faith, but because it was an established institution and helped to maintain law and order. Moral standards were low. Corruption in public life was almost universal. Walpole maintained his power for twenty years by open and notorious bribery. Polite society gathered about the gaming tables, where immense sums were lost and won; or frequented the theaters, where plays were enacted, so immoral that no one can read them to-day without surprise and disgust. To be sure, there was a certain veneer and polish, a superficial refinement, but at heart the age was coarse and corrupt.

The intellectual life was brilliant rather than profound. There was no effort, as with the Puritans, to solve the deep mysteries of life; no effort, as with the Elizabethans, to reach out beyond the limits of ordinary experience and explore unknown worlds. Men were content to make what they could out of ordinary experiences through the exercise of reason and common sense. The center of interest was in the coffee-houses and clubs. Here came, daily, groups of politicians and literary men to discuss the gossip of the town, the newest drama, the latest book, the most startling gains and losses at the gaming table, the latest news of the drawing-rooms, the probable fortunes of political parties. There was about it all, however, a great intellectual zest. Daily discussion made the minds of men keen, discriminating, brilliant.

Characteristics of the Literature. — The change in social, moral, and intellectual standards brought a corresponding change in literature. Instead of a literature of enthusiasm, emotion, and mystery, or of mysticism and melancholy, we have a literature of reason, appealing almost exclusively to the intellect, a literature of the town life consisting largely of wit, satire, and travesty. There were dramas like those of Congreve, witty and licentious, the direct expression of a social life devoid of moral standards. There were essays like those in *The Spectator*, comments on life by the frequenters of the drawing-rooms, the coffee-house, and the club. There was didactic and satirical verse like that of Pope, clever, witty, and faultlessly regular, but never profound; fanciful, but not imaginative. Writers thought less of what they said than of how they said it. Every piece of writing was severely tested by the set rules of art which the French under the leadership of Malherbe and Boileau had formulated from the study of the classical writers and of the Italian scholars. Milton, Shakespeare, and Spenser were

neglected. The result was a clever and finished but not profoundly imaginative literature.

(a) THE DRAMA

Classical Ideas. — The characteristics of the period are well illustrated in the drama. The theaters had been closed by the Puritans in 1642; but the pressure for dramatic entertainments had been so great that, before the end of the Commonwealth, permission had been given to Davenant to present his operatic drama, *The Siege of Rhodes*. This play, Dryden claims, was the beginning of the "heroic drama," the first type of drama to develop when the theaters were opened after the Restoration. Dryden himself was the principal exponent of this kind of play. He did not follow the traditions of Shakespeare and the romantic drama of the Elizabethan time. He followed, rather, Ben Jonson's classical ideas enforced and modified by the rules of dramatic composition which had been formulated by the French critics and exemplified by Corneille and other French dramatists. He tried to conform to the requirements of the three unities, *i.e.*, that the action should be confined to a single place, that the time represented should not exceed twenty-four hours, and that the action should have a clearly defined unity. Dryden's principal heroic plays are *The Indian Emperor* (1665) and *The Conquest of Granada* (1670). They did not altogether satisfy the new classical interest in restraint, for the characters were pushed into an extravagance of passion which caused the plays to be caricatured by the Duke of Buckingham in a mock-heroic play, called *The Rehearsal*. They were, however, prevailingly classical in tone.

Dryden's early plays were written in the heroic couplet, two iambic pentameter lines united by rime; but in his later work rimed verse was abandoned. *All for Love*

(1678), a rehandling of the story of Antony and Cleopatra, was written in blank verse. This play is considered the best of Dryden's tragedies.

Thomas Otway (1651-1685), an unsuccessful actor who turned to the writing of plays, produced two tragedies, which are nearly, if not quite, equal to any of Dryden's. They are *The Orphan* (1680) and *Venice Preserved* (1682). The latter held the stage for many years, and was considered a model for the writing of tragedies. Tragedy did not flourish, however, in the classical period. Even Addison's *Cato* and Johnson's *Irene* are notable largely because their authors became famous in other kinds of writing.

Comedy was more in accord with the spirit of the time, and reflects the time in fashions, manners, and speech. The prevailing taste was for love intrigues developed by means of brilliant dialogue. George Etherege, an Englishman educated in Paris and familiar with the works of Molière, was the first to write plays of this kind. He was followed by William Wycherley (1640-1715), whose most important play is *The Plain Dealer* (1674), and by the more brilliant William Congreve (1670-1729), whose masterpieces were *Love for Love* (1695) and *The Way of the World* (1700). All of these plays are reckless and cynical, expressing the immoral atmosphere of the corrupt court of the Restoration. This gross immorality called forth in 1698 the vigorous protest of Jeremy Collier in a *Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage*, but the coarseness continued in the plays of John Vanbrugh (1666-1726) and to an extent in the work of George Farquhar (1678-1707). After the turn of the century, however, new forces began to work, making for morality and decent living; and in Richard Steele's plays comedy comes into alliance with these forces. The later comedy of the eighteenth century, represented

by Goldsmith (1728–1774) and Sheridan (1751–1816), retains the brilliant dialogue without the gross immorality of the Restoration plays. Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* and Sheridan's *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal* have held the stage down to the present time. Tony Lumpkin, the loutish squire of *She Stoops to Conquer*, Mrs. Malaprop and Bob Acres in *The Rivals*, and Lady Teazle in *The School for Scandal* are still familiar to theater-goers. Their sparkling dialogue is a never failing source of enjoyment. In these plays we have an amusing mock world, light, trifling, and frivolous, but not fundamentally and flagrantly immoral.

(b) NON-DRAMATIC POETRY

Lyric Poetry. — The poetry of classicism — as might be expected in an age in which reason and common sense were emphasized at the expense of imagination and emotion — was for the most part satiric, didactic, and mock-heroic. There was some lyric verse of a high order, Dryden's *Alexander's Feast* for example, a fine ode on the power of music; but for the most part the poetry consisted of light society verse, poems of political and religious controversy, and poetic literary criticism.

Political Satire. — Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* and *Mac Flecknoe* are typical examples of the satiric verse. The former is a political satire. While Charles II was king, the court and country were divided, on the matter of the succession, between the partisans of the king's brother James, who was a Papist, and the adherents of the king's illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth. The famous Earl of Shaftesbury was a partisan of Monmouth, and pushed his claims vigorously before the people and parliament. Dryden, in adherence to James, wrote *Absalom and Achitophel* as a satire on the agitation in behalf of Monmouth. He told

the old story of Absalom's revolt against King David in such a way that Absalom was clearly understood to be the Duke of Monmouth; Achitophel, the Earl of Shaftesbury; David, King Charles II. All the characters, indeed, and all the events have a direct relation to Dryden's own time. *Mac Flecknoe* was an attack upon the poet Shadwell who had entered the controversy as a champion of Shaftesbury and the Whigs.

"**Hudibras.**" — Another satire quite as popular was Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*, a scurrilous mock romance directed against the hypocrisy, intolerance, and cant of the Puritans. It was remarkably popular at the court of King Charles II. The king is said to have carried a copy about with him constantly. A short extract will show its burlesque tone.

"He was in logic a great critic,
Profoundly skilled in analytic;
He could distinguish, and divide
A hair 'twixt south and southwest side;
On either which he would dispute,
Confute, change hands, and still confute;
He'd undertake to prove, by force
Of argument, a man's no horse;
He'd run in debt by disputation,
And pay with ratiocination.

"For he was of that stubborn crew
Of errant saints, whom all men grant
To be the true Church Militant;
Such as do build their faith upon
The holy text of pike and gun;
Decide all controversies by
Infallible artillery;
And prove their doctrine orthodox
By apostolic blows and knocks;
Compound for sins they are inclined to,
By damning those they have no mind to."

Pope's Satires. — Pope's most famous satires are *The Dunciad* and the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*. *The Dunciad* is directed against Pope's literary rivals. The dullards, the pedants, and the bad poets are presented in ridiculous situations. The poem is brilliant, but not judicious, for Pope satirized every one against whom he had the slightest personal spite. *The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* contains the famous clever but unfair description of Addison :

“Peace to all such ! but were there one whose fires
True genius kindles, and fair fame inspires ;
Blest with each talent, and each art to please,
And born to write, converse, and live with ease :
Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne,
View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,
And hate for arts that caused himself to rise ;
Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer ;
Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike
Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike ;
Alike reserved to blame, or to commend,
A timorous foe, and a suspicious friend ;
Dreading e'en fools, by flatterers besieged,
And so obliging, that he ne'er obliged ;
Like Cato, give his little senate laws,
And sit attentive to his own applause ;
While wits and templars every sentence raise,
And wonder with a foolish face of praise —
Who but must laugh, if such a man there be ?
Who would not weep, if Atticus were he ? ”

Later in the century came the less bitter, but none the less interesting *Retaliation* by Oliver Goldsmith. The poet gives amusing pictures of David Garrick, Edmund

Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and other famous members of Dr. Johnson's literary club.

Social satires also were popular. The best is Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, a mock-heroic poem on the artificial society of Queen Anne's time. The theme was suggested by the rude behavior of Lord Petre in cutting a lock of hair from the head of Miss Fennor at a card party at Hampton. The poem pokes delightful fun at the society belle, and is a clever parody of the heroic style in poetry. Dr. Johnson's *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* are in the manner of Juvenal's Latin satires. Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* is an emotional and sympathetic account of the sufferings of the poor. This poem is classical in form, but in its general feeling anticipates the romantic period. The same may be said of Crabbe's *Village*.

The didactic poetry is of less interest. The most important examples are Pope's *Essay on Man* and his *Essay on Criticism*. The *Essay on Man* is an explanation of man's relation to God and the universe, based on reason and common sense rather than on revelation and faith. The first epistle discusses man's place in the universe; the second, his individual nature; the third, his relation to society; the fourth, his attitude toward happiness. The *Essay on Criticism* is a versified statement of the ideas about literature and the rules of criticism which had been formulated by the classical school along the lines suggested by the French critics. The poem sets forth the artistic principles of the time in finished form.

The Closed Couplet. — Most of the poetry was written in "the closed couplet," which consists of two iambic pentameter lines united by rime. The thought is for the most part confined to the limits of the couplet. This verse had been used before in English literature, especially by Waller

and Cowley in the middle of the seventeenth century, but not until the time of Pope did it reach perfect artistic finish, and not until then was the principle established that the thought should be complete at the end of each couplet. The closed couplet became the conventional meter of the classicists.

(c) THE ESSAY AND THE PAMPHLET

Periodical Literature. — It was to be expected that an age of reason and common sense — an age in which the principal interests were in social life and in political controversy — should develop a literature of prose even more important than its poetic literature. Indeed the eighteenth century is distinctly a century of prose. Most of this prose literature, with the exception of novels, appeared in the form of periodicals and pamphlets. The most important periodicals were *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, edited by Addison and Steele; *The Examiner*, conducted by Swift; *The Rambler* and *The Idler*, edited by Dr. Johnson; and *The Gentleman's Magazine* and the *London Magazine*, the forerunners of the famous *Edinburgh, Quarterly*, and *Blackwood's*.

Addison. — *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* set the fashion and became the models in this kind of writing. The chief aim was to make fun of vices and follies and elevate the morals of the age. Addison in particular had a moral purpose, not very profound, perhaps, but representing a distinct reaction against the profligacy and excess of the years immediately following the Restoration. He directed his satire against the coarse vices of gambling, drinking, swearing, dueling, practical joking, indecent conversation. He was the apostle of politeness and refinement, of conventional morality. He wrote also literary criticism, such as the famous series on Milton, and the essay on *The Ballad of Chevy Chace*.

Above all he developed that series of character sketches which is almost a novel, *The Sir Roger de Coverley Papers*. He was perhaps the most graceful and winning humorist of the time.

Richard Steele (1672–1729), who has the credit of founding *The Tatler* and who was intimately associated with Addison in editing *The Spectator*, was a more sympathetic writer than Addison, but not so strong of character nor so keen of intellect. Indeed there is a marked discrepancy between his personal life and the tenor of much of his writings. However, there is a sincere human quality about his inconsistencies which gives his work a peculiar charm. His style is more careless, flexible, and free than that of Addison.

Jonathan Swift (1667–1745) had a more vigorous mind than either Addison or Steele, and in his way was quite as important a personage. He wrote for the periodicals, especially political periodicals, and was the editor of *The Examiner*, an influential Tory paper. Much of his writing, however, appeared in the form of pamphlets. His distinguishing characteristic is his pessimism. He had a thoroughgoing contempt for human nature and was most bitter in his satire. He liked to play practical jokes to show his contempt for men. Once he dispersed a crowd which had gathered to see an eclipse by sending a message that according to the Dean's order the eclipse would be put off for a day. Another practical joke was directed against a man named Partridge, who issued an almanac containing predictions of events to take place during the next year. To expose Partridge, Swift published, over the name Isaac Bickerstaff, *Predictions for the Year 1708*, in which he predicted the death of Partridge on the 29th of March, and, on the 30th of March, followed the prediction with an account of Partridge's last days and death. Of course Partridge insisted that he was still alive,

but Bickerstaff replied with various arguments in the manner of Partridge's almanac, proving that the impostor was certainly dead. Partridge became the laughing-stock of the town.

Swift's Satirical Method. — Swift's writings are, for the most part, both earnest and playful, and often full of very bitter irony. *The Battle of the Books* is a humorous discussion of the comparative merits of ancient and modern writers, suggested by the controversy in which Swift's patron, Sir William Temple, was then deeply engaged. *The Tale of the Tub*, a fierce satire on religion, is, on the face of it, the story of three stupid brothers quarreling over their inheritance. Each of the three has received from his father a coat with minute direction for its care and use. The coat is Christian truth. The brothers, Peter, Martin, and Jack, represent the Church of Rome, the Lutherans, and the Calvinists. The way in which the sons evade their father's will by changing the fashion of their garments constitutes the satire on religious sects. *The Modest Proposal* for preventing the poor in Ireland from becoming burdensome contains the sarcastically cruel suggestion that the children be killed and eaten like pigs and sheep. This would create a market for the largest and, under the existing circumstances, most useless product of the poor. It would make children an asset instead of a bill of expense. It would change the financial burden of the poor into a profitable business.

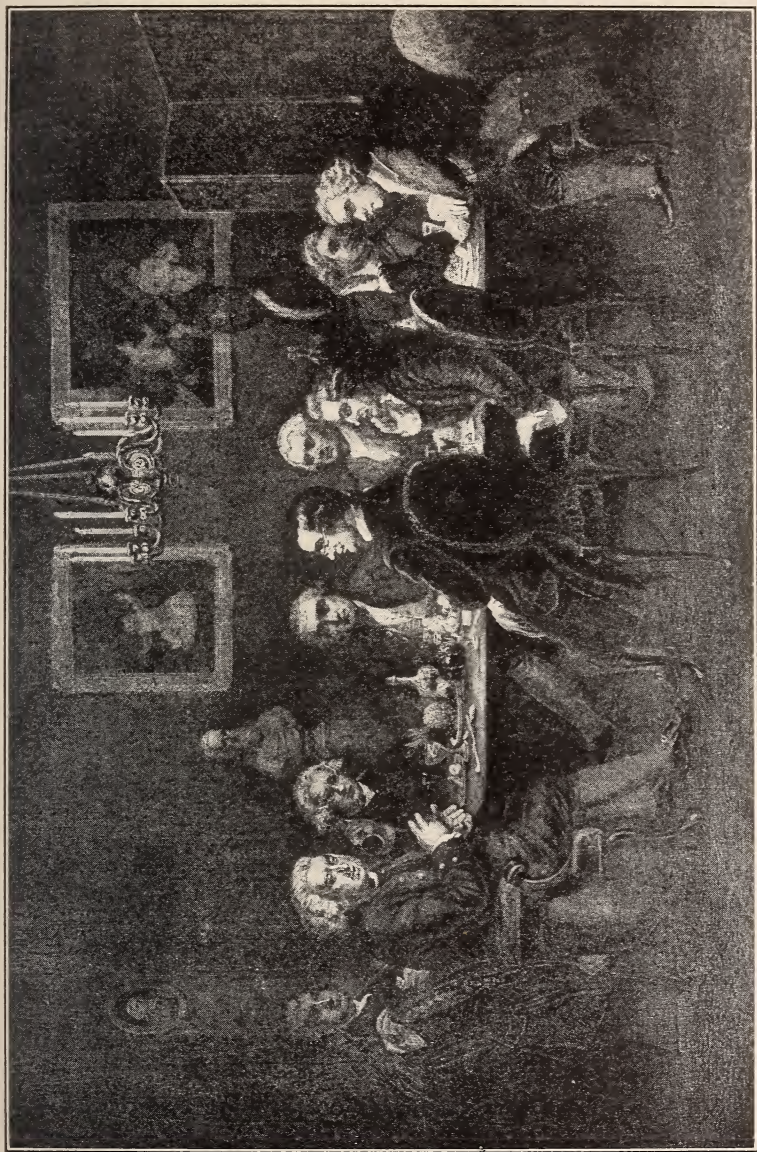
"Gulliver's Travels." — Swift's most widely known book is *Gulliver's Travels*. It may be read with interest merely as a story of adventurous journeys to Lilliput and Brobdingnag and to the country of the Houyhnhnms. Many children have been charmed with it, who knew nothing of its hidden meaning. Beneath the story, however, the mature reader

sees a bitter satire on human nature. In the voyage to Lilliput human motives are set to work on a small scale for the purpose of suggesting the littleness and meanness of human life. In the voyage to Brobdingnag, people larger than men are described and the actions of ordinary human beings made petty and insignificant in comparison. In the land of the Houyhnhnms horses are the rulers and masters; man is in servitude and degradation. The picture of the Yahoo, the human beast, shows Swift's contempt for man at its worst.

Swift was often coarse and to some people disgusting; but his sincere, fierce hatred of sham and affectation made his criticism keen and vigorous. His style, too, often has a directness and simplicity which are truly admirable. Our best source of information about the man himself as an active, successful man of affairs is the daily account of his doings which he himself wrote in his *Journal to Stella*.

Dr. Johnson. — In the middle of the eighteenth century Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709–1784) was the most conspicuous literary figure. Thanks to Boswell's detailed and gossipy account, we know Johnson more intimately than almost any other man of letters; a striking and original person, outwardly huge, awkward, vulgar, contentious, an eccentric "old bear"; inwardly a brave, heroic soul, battling manfully with poverty, disease, and the fear of death, yet never losing faith in God or in himself. This vulgar eccentric became a social lion, the welcome associate of artists, scholars, actors, and literary men, the acknowledged dictator of an elegant age, one of the most learned men of his time.

Range of the Work. — His range of work is noteworthy. Besides the poetry and drama already mentioned, he contributed essays to *The Rambler* and *The Idler* in the fashion of Addison, though without Addison's grace of style. He



A LITERARY PARTY AT SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.
After the painting by James Doyle.

compiled a *Dictionary of the English Language*, whimsical in places rather than scholarly, but important as a pioneer book of its kind. In a single week he wrote *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*, the reflections of the author in story form. He edited the works of Shakespeare; and, in spite of his scant knowledge of the sixteenth-century literature, did it so well that many of his sensible comments still appear in annotated editions of the plays. His best and most lasting work is his *Lives of the Poets*, brief accounts of the authors with critical comments on their writings. His criticisms are not always just, for Johnson was a man of prejudices; but most of the "lives" are well worth reading as the honest though prejudiced judgment of a powerful mind.

Johnson's Style. — Johnson's style is in marked contrast with that of Addison. He praised Addison's style, saying that "the person who would secure a perfect English style must give his days and nights to the study of Addison." But either Johnson did not follow his own advice or did not profit by the study, for his style is often pompous and heavy, crowded with Latin derivatives, and full of long and involved sentences. To be sure these long sentences with all their modifiers often have an effective rhythmic eloquence; and Johnson could be terse and simple when he chose, as his conversation related by Boswell and some of his later literary productions amply show. Yet in general his style is exceedingly artificial and bookish.

Edmund Burke. — One of the last of the eighteenth-century classicists was Edmund Burke. His works have not found a large place in literature, because he gave his attention to political affairs rather than to literary pursuits. He did not hold high political office, but was for long the brains of the Whig opposition to the efforts of George III to increase the royal prerogative. Most of his productions, therefore, are

contributions to the literature of politics and government. His speeches on *American Taxation* (1774) and on *Conciliation with America* (1775) give his ideas on the American Revolution. *The Nabob of Arcot's Debts* and the *Impeachment of Warren Hastings* discuss political affairs in India. *Reflections on the French Revolution* (1790) and *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (1796) are his best contributions to the literature of the French Revolution. He was a practical man of reason and common sense, and therefore naturally a classicist. He believed in established institutions and in the slow development of civilization. He shunned what he thought were impractical doctrines and theories. He was against coercion in America simply because he thought coercion impracticable; and he opposed the French Revolution because it broke connections with the past and was based upon theory and not upon experience. He believed safety lay in stemming the tide of revolution in Europe, and therefore did what he could to marshal the forces of reaction, contributing much to the final English success at Trafalgar and Waterloo.

Romantic Tendencies in Burke and Johnson. — Standing thus for the reasonable and the practical, he allied himself with the classicists in literature; yet he was not an uncompromising adherent of that school. The breadth of his sympathy and the fervor of his imagination gave him a kinship with the rising romanticists. Both Burke and Johnson, indeed, show signs of the new influences. In general they both followed in the way of the classicists, and championed the old ideas of art; but in critical ideas Johnson was not so thorough a formalist as his immediate predecessors, accepting, for instance, only with considerable modification and reservation the doctrine of the three dramatic unities, as the preface to his edition of Shakespeare clearly shows; and

Burke departed from the practice of the classicists in mingling with his statistics and his philosophy brilliant flights of imagination and powerful emotional appeals.

(d) THE NOVEL

The Periodicals. — The classical age of reason and common sense developed a type of prose fiction radically different from the old romances of chivalry, which were far too extravagant to appeal to a matter-of-fact age. The new tendency is seen in the periodical literature as early as *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. The character sketching, at first abstract and general, becomes individual, personal, lifelike. Brief stories appear under such titles as *The Civil Husband* (*Tatler*, No. 53) and *The Story of Miss Betty Cured of Her Vanity* (*Guardian*, No. 159). *The Sir Roger de Coverley Papers*, a series of essays united by common characters and by a continuous story, is a real forerunner of the novel of life.

Picaresque Stories. — Another influence came from the Spanish picaresque stories, autobiographical accounts of the vagrant experiences of unscrupulous rogues, who mingle in real life, lying, cheating, and stealing, and who tell of their rogueries with impudent candor. Daniel Defoe's *Colonel Jack* is a typical English story of this kind. The hero is of gentle blood, but is brought up among thieves and pick-pockets, with no adequate conception of right and wrong. He is kidnapped and taken to Virginia, where he rises to influence. He returns to England, a merchant, goes to the wars, behaves bravely, gets preferment, and is finally made colonel of a regiment. *The Journal of the Plague Year* illustrates the same kind of writing. Defoe had a way of making all his stories marvelously real by the massing of details and by a simple matter-of-fact style. His *Robinson Crusoe* has been one of the most widely read of English books.

Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* shows this type of story adapted to purposes of satire.

The Love Story. — Samuel Richardson (1689–1761) was the first great writer of love stories. He was minute in the analysis of character, developed carefully the idea of plot, and emphasized sentiment. He began as a letter writer. One of his diversions as a young man was to write love letters for the young women of his neighborhood, all of whom seem to have made him their confidant in love affairs. Indeed he made a specialty of the feminine heart. His most famous book, *Clarissa Harlowe*, is a love story in the form of letters. It is most elaborately analytical. Every movement of Clarissa's mind, every flutter of her heart, is subjected to the most searching analysis and then discussed and rediscussed from every conceivable point of view. The plot movement is slow, but it is constant, and is developed to a high tension at the climax. In scenes of intense passion Richardson is at his best. His other stories are *Pamela* and *Sir Charles Grandison*.

Henry Fielding (1707–1754) was a more genuine realist than Richardson. He knew more of life, and he knew it better. He began novel writing in protest against the moral pretensions and sentimentality of Richardson. The contrast is therefore marked. Richardson's novels are of the hothouse variety; Fielding's have the vigor of the sunshine and the air.

Tom Jones is Fielding's most famous book. The story opens with the discovery of the hero as a new-born babe in the house of a virtuous gentleman, Mr. Allworthy. Here he grows up with Allworthy's nephew Blifel, who out of jealousy ruins Tom's reputation with his benefactor, and gets him turned out into the world. Meanwhile Tom has fallen in love with the daughter of a neighbor, Miss Sophia Western, who returns his love in spite of the opposition of

her father. Tom travels to London, with many wayside adventures; he passes, not unscathed, through various temptations; and finally, by the discovery of the secret of his birth and the revelation of Blifel's villainy, he is advanced to his happy fortune, the favor of Allworthy, and marriage with Sophia. The structure of the story is particularly noteworthy. The secret of Jones's parentage is skillfully kept from the reader till the end and then disclosed in a natural way. Cheap devices of plot, based on pure chance, are avoided. Conversations are direct, not reported. The scenes are localized and given a real background. Character and incident are equalized.

Other novels by Fielding are *Joseph Andrews*, *Jonathan Wild*, and *Amelia*. Fielding's work is often coarse, and his point of view worldly like the age. And since he cared nothing for spiritual things, his ideals are not high. Still he is always direct and sincere. His novels display genuine humanity.

Smollett and Sterne. — Two other stories of wide reputation are Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker* and Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. *Humphrey Clinker* is haphazard in plot and full of unpleasant incidents. The humor is of a savage sort, consisting largely of cruel practical jokes. The method of treatment is far less sympathetic than Fielding's. As a record of contemporary life and manners, however, the book has decided interest. *Tristram Shandy* can hardly be called a novel. It has no plan; no beginning, no progress, no conclusion. Sterne says, "I began it with no clear idea of what it was to turn out, only a design of shocking people and amusing myself." Sterne had absolutely no sense of propriety; and since his mind was incongruous and thoroughly sentimental, he naturally wrote a whimsical and immoral book. The characters, however, are so very real and have such distinc-

tively human charm that the book is still read with interest in spite of its obvious faults.

Goldsmith's "**Vicar of Wakefield.**" — One of the most delightful books of the period is Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*. The plot is artlessly absurd, the situations comical, the humor delightful, the style graceful. The wholesome optimism of the book is in marked contrast with the work of Sterne and of Swift, and not altogether characteristic of classicism. Goldsmith is not a realist; he does not accept the world as it is; he insists upon idealizing it. Nor does his story have to do with the social life of cities. It is an account of simple family life, and treats "the out-of-doors" with real feeling. Indeed Goldsmith has much in common with the new romantic tendencies. *The Vicar of Wakefield* belongs to the literature of transition.

(e) CRITICISM

Criticism. — The ideas of the classicists about literature are expressed in their critical writings. The earliest important work is Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*. In his defense of contemporary English writers, he takes for granted that they are to be judged in general by the classical rules formulated by the French. Reference is made to Shakespeare, and his genius commended; but as a technical artist Ben Jonson is considered his superior. The argument is that Jonson and those who have followed his example in English have conformed to the classical standards quite as rigidly as the great French dramatists. Dryden argues also for the heroic couplet as the most satisfactory verse form for tragedy. A few years later, Pope put the classical ideas into poetic form in his *Essay on Criticism*. A few quotations will illustrate its prevailing ideas — the dependence on rules, the emphasis upon form, the appeal to reason and restraint:

- "Be Homer's works your study and delight :
Read them by day, and meditate by night."
- "Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem ;
To copy nature is to copy them."
- "Those rules of old discovered, not devised,
Are nature still but nature methodized."
- "True wit is nature to advantage dress'd :
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed."
- "True ease in writing comes from art, not chance."
- "Be not the first by whom the new are tried
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside."
- "A Boileau still in right of Horace sways."

Later Criticism. — Addison's critical essays in *The Spectator* follow the same lines, though he departed from conventional notions in praising Milton, whom the classicists, in general, neglected, and especially in commenting with favor on the old ballad literature as illustrated in *Chevy Chase*. As the century advanced the critical formulas became less rigid. Dr. Johnson praised Shakespeare, and refused strict adherence to the rules for the three dramatic unities. A little later Thomas and Joseph Warton paid tribute to Spenser, the greatest of early romanticists, in their *Observations on the Faerie Queene*. This book led the critical revolt against classicism. The last important critical work of the classicists was Burke's *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas on the Sublime and the Beautiful*.

SUGGESTED READINGS¹

Pope: *The Rape of the Lock*.

Addison and Steele: *The Sir Roger de Coverley Papers*.

¹ Except where special editions are mentioned, the works are to be found in the Pocket Series of English Classics, published by The Macmillan Company.

Defoe: *Robinson Crusoe*, or *The Journal of the Plague Year*.

Swift: *Gulliver's Travels*.

Johnson: Life of Pope in *The Lives of the Poets*. (Cassell's National Library.)

Goldsmith: *The Deserted Village*, *She stoops to Conquer*, *Retaliation*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*.

Sheridan: *The Rivals*.

Burke: *Speech on Conciliation with America*.

Irving: *Life of Goldsmith*.

Thackeray: *Henry Esmond*.

CHAPTER VI

ROMANTICISM

(a) POETRY

Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century. — Although the spirit of classicism, with its emphasis upon reason and common sense, and with its interest in literary form over subject matter, was in control in the eighteenth century, it was not the only influence at work. Side by side with it were other interests, growing in importance through the century, until, in the end, they became the dominant forces, and resulted in the great outburst of romanticism in the early nineteenth century.

Influence of Spenser. — One of the first of the new influences was a renewed interest in the older English writers, especially Spenser and Milton. The earliest interest was in poetic form merely. Although the prevailing meter was the heroic couplet, still the Spenserian stanza — consisting of nine lines, eight iambic pentameter lines supplemented by one iambic hexameter or Alexandrian, riming *ababbcbcc* — was used to a limited extent from the beginning of the century. At first, however, it was employed only for purposes of satire, with no effort to get the atmosphere of mystery and romance or the rich melody of the verse. The first poet to get the real Spenserian manner was Shenstone. He began a satire called *The Schoolmistress* in the Spenserian stanza, studying Spenser as he wrote. He soon became genuinely

interested, and before his poem was finished, he had changed it into a sincere Spenserian imitation.

James Thomson (1700-1748) also imitated Spenser sympathetically in *The Castle of Indolence*. Compare the following stanza from Thomson with the stanza from Spenser quoted on page 222.

"A pleasing land of drowsy-head it was,
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
Forever flushing round a summer sky:
There eke the soft delights, that witchingly
Instil a wanton sweetness through the breast;
And the calm pleasures always hovered nigh;
But whate'er smacked of noyance or unrest,
Was far, far off expelled from this delicious nest."

The Wartons, by their *Observations on the Faerie Queene*, increased the appreciation of Spenser.

The Influence of Milton. — Milton also was imitated both in form and thought. The octosyllabic couplet of *Il Penseroso* and later the blank verse of *Paradise Lost* were used by Parnell, Joseph and Thomas Warton, and others; and this mood of "meditative comfortable melancholy" — the *Il Penseroso* mood — gave rise to an entire school of "graveyard poetry," of which Robert Blair's *The Grave* and Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* are examples, and of which Thomas Gray's *An Elegy in a Country Churchyard* is the most finished product.

Romance. — A second tendency away from classicism was a new interest in medieval ideas and customs. Horace Walpole, the model of fashion, started the interest by building a Gothic castle on Strawberry Hill, and gathering together there a collection of antiquities. He also wrote a medieval romance full of mystery and superstition. This

romance, *The Castle of Otranto*, was the forerunner of a long series of stories, of which Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron*, Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and Matthew Gregory Lewis's *Monk* are rather crude examples, and of which the novels of Sir Walter Scott are the artistic climax.

Ballads. — The old ballads and romances also came into vogue. As early as 1711 Addison spoke favorably, though conservatively, of *Chevy Chace*, and Bishop Percy firmly established the ballad interest by the publication of the *Reliques of Ancient Poetry* in 1765. The old manuscript which formed the basis of Percy's book was found by chance in the house of a friend. Percy discovered it under an old bureau, where it had been carelessly thrown, after some of the leaves had been torn away. He read the manuscript with much interest, and after consultation with his friends, decided to print it along with a number of modern songs. The volume contains a fairly representative selection of the older ballads: heroic ballads like *Robin Hood*, historical ballads like *Chevy Chace* and *Sir Patrick Spence*, romance ballads like *Lord Thomas and Fair Annet*. The *Reliques of Ancient Poetry* was followed by the collections of Ritson, Sir Walter Scott, and others. The freshness and simplicity of these old ballads delighted all those who were becoming tired of the conventions and artifices of classicism.

Northern Antiquities. — Bishop Percy is responsible for another epoch-making book entitled *Northern Antiquities* (1770), which was translated from a French work written by Paul H. Mallet, professor at the University of Copenhagen. This book gives an account of the weird northern mythology, and contains translations from the Old Norse literature. Its influence in England is best seen in the poetry of Thomas Gray, especially in *The Descent of Odin* and *The Fatal*

Sisters. The same interest in the somber, mysterious, and weird is illustrated in James Macpherson's *Ossian*, a story developed out of scraps of legend which Macpherson had picked up in the highlands of Scotland. To the same general movement belong Robert Evans's *Some Specimens of the Poetry of the Ancient Welsh Bards*, Collins's *Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland*, and Thomas Chatterton's *Rowley Poems*, inspired by manuscripts which he found in the old church of St. Mary Redcliffe in Bristol.

Renewed Interest in Nature. — A third romantic tendency was the renewed interest in nature and in country life. The classicists loved the city. Their only interest in nature came from classical books, or from artificial gardens mathematically laid out. Gradually, however, there grew up an interest in real English woods and fields and streams. People began to seek relaxation in the country, and came to enjoy nature in her rural state. The most important nature poems of the middle eighteenth century are James Thomson's (1700–1748) *Seasons* and William Cowper's (1731–1800) *The Task*. Thomson was reared in the country; Cowper spent most of his life there. Both loved nature sincerely. Thomson had the wider interest; but Cowper was a more accurate observer, and had the advantage of writing with his eye upon the object to be described. Cowper had less, too, of the conventional poetic phraseology of the classical school. Both men, however, show a marked departure from the manner of the classicists.

The French Revolution. — The French Revolution furnished still another impetus to romanticism. It stimulated Englishmen to throw off the restraint of convention; to become more independent of laws, customs, and traditions; to assert individuality. It created a discontent with the world as it was, and stimulated the imagination to dwell upon the

ideal human state. The influence was both doctrinal and emotional. William Godwin's *Political Justice* introduced into England the doctrines of the French Revolution; the belief in simplicity, the reliance on natural impulse as opposed to reason and common sense, and the faith in the perfectability of the human race, if it could be freed from the restraints of customs and conventions, of religion and laws. This book had a large influence upon the romantic poets, especially upon Shelley, Godwin's son-in-law. But, independent of doctrines, the whole outburst in France in favor of liberty, equality, and fraternity aroused the enthusiasm of young Englishmen, and helped emphasize in literature the imagination and the emotions. It called attention to the poor and lowly; it evoked interest in the simple and fundamental things of life.

Robert Burns. — By far the most popular of the early romantic poets was Robert Burns (1759–1796), a poor Scotch farmer with an impulsive nature, rich in emotions, and with a remarkable genius for song. He voiced the loves and sorrows of the simple poor with rare truth and intensity. His democratic ideas, his large human sympathy, his love of nature, especially of animals and flowers, his hatred of cant and hypocrisy, his rich humor — all united to give him a deservedly wide popularity. His moral fiber, however, was weak. He lived a pathetic life, struggling desperately for daily bread, giving himself over to dissipation, and dying in poverty and bitter neglect. One stanza of his epitaph written by himself should be remembered.

“The poor inhabitant below
Was quick to learn, and wise to know,
And keenly felt the friendly glow and softer flame,
But thoughtless follies laid him low
And stain’d his name.”

His Poetry. — The best poem of Burns on the virtues of the Scotch peasant is *The Cotter's Saturday Night*. Humor prevails in *The Jolly Beggars* and *Tam o' Shanter*. The most exquisite nature touches are found in *To a Mountain Daisy* and *To a Mouse*. The most striking patriotic song is *Scots wha ha' wi' Wallace Bled*; the most tender love songs: *Green Grows the Rashies O*, *John Anderson my Jo*, *To Mary in Heaven*, and *The Banks o' Doon*. The most famous poem on equality and democracy is *A Man's a Man for a' That*. In these poems particularly Burns shows his great qualities as a poet: downright sincerity, intensity of emotion, keenness and vigor of mind.

Wordsworth. Peasant Poetry. — William Wordsworth (1770–1850) was, like Burns, a poet of the poor and the lowly. He believed that among the lower classes the most simple and fundamental human emotions were to be found at their best. *Michael*, his most popular poem of this kind, is a simple story of a Westmoreland peasant who is compelled to send his only son away from home to make a living. The boy falls into evil ways in the city, and is finally forced “to seek a hiding place beyond the sea,” leaving the old man to wear out his life in poverty and sorrow. The story is remarkable for its simple pathos. It shows how Wordsworth, when at his best, could lift the commonplace into genuine poetry.

Nature Poetry. — But Wordsworth was preëminently the romantic poet of nature. He spent nearly all his life of eighty years in the lake and mountain region of Westmoreland and Cumberland, developing in the midst of quiet surroundings that poise of mind and serenity of spirit which were his chief gifts to his age. His ideas about nature were peculiar. As a boy, he loved her just for the sake of her beauty and for the sake of the physical joy of healthy out-

door life ; but, as he grew older, he saw her deeper meaning. He believed in the spiritual kinship between man and nature. Nature seemed to him the language of the divine ; and he thought it was his mission as poet and seer to interpret the meaning of that language. In this he was more romantic than Thomson or Cowper, or indeed, than any of the nature poets who had preceded him.

His theory of nature is expressed in *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey* :

“For nature then [in boyhood]

*	*	*	*	*	*
*	*	*	*	*	*

To me was all in all. — I cannot paint
 What then I was. The sounding cataract
 Haunted me like a passion ; the tall rock,
 The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
 Their colours, and their forms were then to me
 An appetite ; a feeling and a love,
 That had no need of a remoter charm,
 By thought supplied, nor any interest
 Unborrowed from the eye. — That time is past,
 And all its aching joys are now no more,
 And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
 Faint I, nor mourn, nor murmur ; other gifts
 Have followed ; for such loss, I would believe,
 Abundant recompense. For I have learned
 To look on nature, not as in the hour
 Of thoughtless youth ; but hearing often times
 The still, sad music of humanity,
 Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
 To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy
 Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime
 Of something far more deeply interfused,

Whose dwelling is the light of setting*suns,
 And the round ocean and the living air,
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man ;
 A motion and a spirit, that impels
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
 And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
 A lover of the meadows and the woods,
 And mountains ; and all that we behold
 From this green earth ; of all the mighty world
 Of eye, and ear, — both what they half create,
 And what perceive ; well pleased to recognize
 In nature and the language of the sense,
 The anchor of my purest thought, the nurse,
 The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
 Of all my moral being.”

Wordsworth's Speculations. — Wordsworth delighted in mysterious and mystical speculations. Spiritual facts sometimes appeared to him more real than physical facts. The physical world seemed a kind of prison house confining spirits which had belonged to a larger life, and which would return to that larger life when released from the flesh. His boldest speculative poem is perhaps *Intimations of Immortality*, of which the following stanza contains the central idea :

“Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :
 The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
 Hath had elsewhere its setting,
 And cometh from afar ;
 Not in entire forgetfulness,
 And not in utter nakedness,
 But trailing clouds of glory do we come
 From God, who is our home :
 Heaven lies about us in our infancy !
 Shades of the prison-house begin to close
 Upon the growing Boy,

But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The Youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day."

Moral Ideas. — The lofty moral ideas of Wordsworth are further expressed in *The Prelude* and in *The Ode to Duty*. *The Prelude* is an autobiographical account of the growth of the poet's mind. It is not significant as a piece of literary art, but very important in the understanding of the poet's personality. *The Ode to Duty* is remarkable for its high moral enthusiasm, expressed with great dignity and restraint.

Wordsworth's Sonnets. — Wordsworth is also one of the greatest sonnet writers of the nineteenth century. The limitations of the form seem to have helped rather than to have hindered his imagination. Among the best of his sonnets are *To Milton*, *It is a Beauteous Evening*, *Westminster Bridge*, *The World is too Much with Us*.

Coleridge's Poetic Method. — Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) was the most intimate friend of Wordsworth during the years when the best poetry of each was written. Their first public venture in poetry, *The Lyrical Ballads* (1798), was planned as a joint production, though, in the end, the only important contribution of Coleridge was *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. The poetical methods of the two men, however, differed widely. Wordsworth's idea was to take real and commonplace incidents as subjects, and lift them by means of his reflective imagination into the realm of poetry. Coleridge's aim was to take the most mysterious, superstitious, and improbable incidents, and by detailed and

specific treatment make them seem real. All that was weird and mysterious and improbable in the old ballads and romances stimulated Coleridge's imagination; he loved, too, their simplicity and naïveté. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel* illustrate medieval luxuriance of imagination wrought into finished poetry by the conscious artist. *The Ancient Mariner*, moreover, is in the ballad meter, and shows many of the tricks of the ballad style. Other notable ballads are *The Dark Ladie* and *The Three Graves*. The dreamy and intangible quality of imagination is at its height in *Kubla Khan*, an oriental dream picture, which defies analysis, but charms by its rhythmic imagery. There is a magic quality about Coleridge at his best which has never been equaled.

Loss of Poetic Power. — Unfortunately, however, his poetic output was not great. He lacked the power of sustained and protracted poetic effort, his mind turned to philosophic speculation, and he lost what he called his "shaping spirit of Imagination." In *Dejection: an Ode*, he says:

"There was a time when, though my path was rough,
 This joy within me dallied with distress,
 And all misfortunes were but as the stuff
 Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness:
 For hope grew round me, like the twining vine,
 And fruits, and foliage, not my own, seemed mine.
 But now afflictions bow me down to earth:
 Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth;
 But oh! each visitation
 Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,
 My shaping spirit of Imagination.
 For not to think of what I needs must feel,
 But to be still and patient, all I can;
 And haply by abstruse research to steal
 From my own nature all the natural man —

This was my sole resource, my only plan ;
Till that which suits a part infects the whole,
And now is almost grown the habit of my soul."

Revolutionary Poems. — Both Coleridge and Wordsworth were influenced by the French Revolution, but only in an emotional way. Both were by nature too religious to accept the materialism, atheism, and anarchy of the revolutionary doctrines; consequently as soon as the excesses in France became prominent, both repudiated the movement. Wordsworth took refuge in nature; Coleridge, in philosophical speculation. Among Coleridge's revolutionary poems, *The Destruction of the Bastille* is an early outburst of emotional sympathy; the *Ode on the Departing Year* is a reproach of England for joining the coalition against France. *France: an Ode* is a bitter recantation. When liberty in France had drifted into tyranny, and, mad for conquest, had overthrown the freedom of Switzerland, Coleridge turned away in bitterness and disgust.

"Forgive me, Freedom ! O forgive those dreams !
I hear thy voice, I hear thy loud lament,
From bleak Helvetia's icy caverns sent —
I hear thy groans upon her blood-stained streams.
Heroes, that for your peaceful country perished,
And ye that, fleeing, spot your mountain snows
With bleeding wounds : forgive me that I cherished
One thought that ever blessed your cruel foes !
To scatter rage and traitorous guilt
Where Peace her jealous home had built ;
A patriot-race to disinherit
Of all that made their stormy wilds so dear
And with inexpiable spirit
To taint the bloodless freedom of the mountaineer —
O France, that mockest Heaven, adulterous, blind,
And patriot only in pernicious toils !

Are these thy boasts, Champion of human kind?
To mix with Kings in the low lust of sway,
Yell in the hunt, and share the murderous prey;
To insult the shrine of Liberty with spoils
From freedom torn; to tempt and to betray?"

Shelley's Revolutionary Poems. — A more genuine child of the Revolution was Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822). He was a rebel from the very beginning, chafing under every form of restraint. At school, he was called "mad Shelley, the atheist." In early manhood, when he came under the influence of Godwin, he accepted the revolutionary doctrines entire. Thus it happened that, unlike Wordsworth and Coleridge, he represents the revolution on both its doctrinal and emotional sides. He believed profoundly that all the woes of men were to be traced to the tyranny of priests and kings. If man could only do away with governments and religions, and start the world afresh along lines of absolute freedom, the race could be educated into a state of perfection. *Queen Mab*, his earliest revolutionary poem, is a fierce denunciation of priests and kings. *The Revolt of Islam* is a story of heroic sacrifice in the cause of liberty. His most characteristic work, however, is *Prometheus Unbound*. It is a revision of the old classical myth according to which Prometheus, the champion of mankind against the tyranny of Zeus, has been chained to a rock on Mount Caucasus, from which torment Zeus is determined not to free him, unless he will tell the secret upon which the continuance of the power of Zeus depends. The old myth relates that Prometheus finally tells the secret, and is set free. Shelley changes the myth to suit his revolutionary ideas. Prometheus represents, not the deliverer of mankind, but mankind itself, bending under the tyranny of priests and kings. He will not yield. Furies torment him with the

thought that all efforts of the past for the good of mankind have been turned to evil; but spirits of heroic action, self-sacrifice, wisdom, imagination, and love comfort him. In the fullness of time Demagorgon (Necessity) hurls tyranny from the throne. Asia, who represents the spirit of love in nature, is united to Prometheus, the spirit of man, and the golden age begins. The last act is a series of lyrics, celebrating the age of perfect justice and peace. The poem shows Shelley's hatred of tyranny, and his sublime faith in a perfected humanity ruled everywhere by love. Its weakness is that it gives no light on how the result is to be brought about.

Shelley not a Constructive Thinker. — Indeed, Shelley was not a constructive thinker; he was a lyric poet. His sense of fact was not strong. He deals less with the practical actualities of life than any of his contemporaries. He was an uncompromising idealist, with a sublime faith in the future of mankind; but the visions which his faith pictured were unaccompanied by serious thought of how those visions were to be realized. However, the wealth of his imagination and the rich music of his verse gave his ideas enduring artistic form.

"Adonais." — His poetry is of the elusive, ethereal quality almost baffling to the commonplace mind. Even his nature imagery has to do with evanescent forms, the wind, the cloud, the voice of the unseen nightingale or skylark. This air of unreality is well illustrated in *Adonais*, his elegy on the death of John Keats. Those who come to weep over the bier are Urania (Heavenly Love), Splendors, Glooms, Hours, Destinies, and even the lovely Dreams which have emanated from the poet's brain in life. Shelley has been well called the poet's poet.

The Poetry of Scott. — Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832)

represents primarily the influence of the old ballads and romances. From a child, he was familiar with all the legendary lore of the Scotch, and later published a large collection of old border ballads under the name, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. His first original productions were metrical romances, the meter being suggested by Coleridge's *Christabel*. The best are *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805) a tale of Scottish border life in the Middle Ages, *Marmion, A Tale of Flodden Field* (1808), and *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), a story of the Scottish highlands at the time of James V of Scotland. Of these, *Marmion* is the most swift and powerful; *The Lady of the Lake*, the richest and most charming. These poems made Scott for a time the most popular literary man in the British Islands, and the Scott country still remains one of the most popular for literary pilgrimages.

Qualities of his Poetry. — His poetry was not so deeply imaginative, not so artistically finished, as the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Scott was interested primarily in the pageantry of life. His romantic scenery is picturesque, his characters bold and wholesome, his story spirited and borne along on a rapid and buoyant verse. There is much brilliant declamation.

Byron's Romanticism. — After the triumph of *The Lady of the Lake*, Scott's fame as a poet began to decline, his place in the popular favor being taken by Lord Byron (1788-1824). Byron's early poetry shows the influence of classicism. *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, for instance, is written in rimed couplets and in the manner of eighteenth-century satire. But he soon developed marked romantic tendencies. His tales of Oriental life, *The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair*, *Lara*, etc., are lurid and extravagant. *Childe Harold* is a story of travel, written in Spenserian stanzas, and recounting journeys in Portugal, Spain, Illyria, Greece,

Turkey, the Rhine Country, and Italy. It is full of brilliant description, enriched by literary and historical allusions. Its mood is somber, passionate, rebellious. Harold, the protagonist, is a typical romantic figure, fleeing from the real world to find solace in solitude.

Byron a Poet of Revolution. — Byron was the prince of radicals and revolutionists. He became for all Europe the prophet of liberty, voicing better than any one else the revolutionary feeling which smoldered everywhere after the failure of the French Revolution. Less of a doctrinaire than Shelley, he yet had a supreme contempt for all manner of restraint, and a passionate love of liberty. Add to this an oratorical method free from all refinements and subtleties, and the reason for his wide popularity is explained. His dramas *Manfred* and *Cain* are characteristic revolutionary pieces. *Manfred* is a kind of Faust, living high up in the Alps in gloomy and bitter isolation, scornful of his fate. *Cain*, the first murderer, is pictured as an heroic rebel against the tyranny of God. He is one of those

“Souls who dare to look the Omnipotent tyrant in
His everlasting face, and tell him that
His evil is not good.”

Byron has been called the chief member of the “Satanic School of Poetry.”

“The Prisoner of Chillon.” — His most finished poem is *The Prisoner of Chillon*, the pathetic recital of a Swiss patriot who has been released from a dungeon after years of imprisonment, having seen his two brothers, who were imprisoned with him, die in their chains, and find graves beneath the floor of the dungeon.

Byron's Satires. — Byron was also a satirist, the only one of the great romantic poets to win fame in this form of art.

His *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* is a clever attack upon the critics and poets of his time. *The Vision of Judgment* is directed against the poet Southey, who had aroused Byron's ire by praising George III. *Don Juan*, the most famous of all, is a comprehensive satire on modern society. Byron ruthlessly exposes the social corruption hidden beneath the conventional veneer. The work is licentious but brilliant. It is, of all Byron's poems, the most complete expression of his strange personality.

John Keats (1796-1821) occupies a place apart from his fellow-romanticists. He took almost no interest in the problems of his own time. His poetic inspiration came almost exclusively from the classical and medieval past. Most of his information about Greek story and mythology came out of the classical dictionary, for he could not read the Greek language; yet somehow he gained a sympathetic appreciation of the Greek spirit. At the same time, he knew and loved medieval romance with all its imaginative luxuriance. The combination of the classical and the romantic in his nature made him unique in his time. *Endymion* is a classical theme treated with romantic extravagance. *Lamia*, too, is rich in romantic coloring. *Isabella* and *The Eve of St. Agnes* are medieval themes. *The Eve of St. Agnes* has been called an "unsurpassed example of the pure charm of colored and romantic narrative in English verse." *Hyperion* shows the Miltonic influence; it is an example of "the grand style in poetry." His great odes, especially the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* and the *Ode to a Nightingale*, have rare beauty and finish. Indeed, Keats worshiped beauty. His poetic creed is expressed at the end of the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*:

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty, this is all
We know on earth and all we need to know."



ISABELLA AND THE POT OF BASIL.

After the painting by Holman Hunt.

The second volume he published began with the line

“A thing of beauty is a joy forever.”

Keats died at the age of twenty-five; yet he left work of such rare excellence that it has had a profound influence upon subsequent verse.

(b) PROSE

As the age of reason and common sense was preëminently an age of prose, so the age of imagination and emotion was an age of poetry. Still, romanticism had its stories in prose and its essays. Sir Walter Scott was the great exponent of the prose romance. When his poetic inspiration began to abate, and Byron threatened to take away his popularity, Scott turned to the writing of prose stories, and published *Waverley*, the first of the so-called Waverley Novels. He did not continue the realistic traditions of Richardson or Fielding, but set himself rather to develop the method of Mrs. Radcliffe and “Monk” Lewis, looking back to the Middle Ages for inspiration, exploiting the mystery and superstition and high adventure of that romantic past. He played upon it all, however, with the hand of an artist, so that, although Mrs. Radcliffe and her school are now ridiculous, Scott still remains one of our great English masters.

Scott's Prose Romances. — His romances may be divided into two general classes: one pertaining to the medieval past of England; the other, to the past of Scotland. *Ivanhoe* is a story of the time of the crusades; *Kenilworth*, of the time of Queen Elizabeth. These represent the English past. *Old Mortality* treats of the Scotch Covenanters. Other Scotch romances are *Guy Mannering*, *The Heart of Midlothian*, *Rob Roy*.

Scott's Method. — Scott placed the emphasis on pagantry and adventure. To be sure, the characters are often

fine typical figures: Bailie Jarvis in *Rob Roy*, Jeanie Deans in *The Heart of Midlothian*, Meg Merrilies in *Guy Mannering* are vivid Scotch portraits. Yet we are interested not so much in their character as in their fortunes; and not so much in the meaning of life as in its outward show. Scott's chief purpose was to entertain. He was not a romanticist of the Byron or Shelley type; he had no radical tendencies, political or social; he did not feel the tyranny of conventional life. He had just a fascinating interest in the past of England and Scotland and knew how to make its pageantry and high adventure live again. He exploited the simple and fundamental aspects of romance.

Wordsworth's Critical Writings. — The romantic school also developed a literature of criticism. Wordsworth, in his famous prefaces to the various editions of *The Lyrical Ballads*, took direct issue with the classicists. First, he insisted that the passions were the subject matter for poetry. Poetry, to him, was not a mechanical process, but "the spontaneous overflow of the feelings," modified, to be sure, by reflection, but generated, not manufactured. He spoke of poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquillity." Secondly, he believed that the poor and the lowly are fitter subjects for poetry than the great, because among the plain people the simple and fundamental emotions are to be found in the greatest sincerity and truth. In the third place, he discarded the old doctrine of poetic diction, going so far as to claim that the language of poetry differs in no essential particular from the language of prose. In the fourth place, he insisted upon the imagination as the shaping power of poetry.

Coleridge as a Critic. — Coleridge, in his *Biographia Literaria* and other critical and philosophical works, agreed in general with Wordsworth, except in the matter of poetic

diction. He emphasized especially the function of the imagination, which he explained and defended according to the principles of German idealism. He laid much stress upon a distinction between "reason" and "understanding," the "reason" being a peculiarly high power of the mind to grasp truth which cannot be explained by the common "understanding." Carlyle spoke of Coleridge's ideas as "philosophical moonshine," and there may be truth in the remark as far as abstract philosophical speculation is concerned; yet Coleridge's criticisms of particular pieces of literature, such as his comments on Shakespeare, are highly appreciative and illuminating. Indeed his present rank as a critic is very high, perhaps among the world's great five or six.

The Critical Reviews. — This period was also the period of the great critical reviews: *The Edinburgh Review*, *The Quarterly Review*, and *Blackwood's Magazine*. The most influential contributors were Francis Jeffrey and Professor John Wilson. They were acknowledged authorities. Their criticism was keen and penetrating, but often bitterly dogmatic, the result of mere personal opinion and prejudice. It was against Jeffrey in particular that Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* was directed.

Appreciative Criticism. — William Hazlitt (1784-1859) and Charles Lamb (1775-1834) were more sympathetic critics. They made criticism "a kind of romance in the world of books." Lamb was an especially sympathetic critic, a lifelong friend of Coleridge, a defender of Wordsworth and the new poetic school, an enthusiastic admirer of the older romantic literature of the Elizabethan time. His *Specimens of Early English Dramatists*, with critical comments, displays a wide and discriminating reading in Shakespeare's contemporaries. It did much to revive the

fame of the lesser dramatists, whom the classicists had almost entirely neglected.

Lamb as a Critic of Life. — But Lamb was quite as much a critic of life as a critic of literature. He lived year in and year out in London, a close and sympathetic observer of men and manners. Moreover, he saw everything in the light of the quaint humor of his own character and in the light of the touching pathos of his own simple, heroic life. His keen sympathy and quaint style have made him one of the most charming of English essayists. His *Essays of Elia* and *Last Essays of Elia* are his most popular books. Among the individual essays, *Old China*, *A Dissertation on Roast Pig*, and *Dream Children* illustrate very well the delicacy of his dreamy imagination, the quaintness of his humor, and the sincerity of his pathos.

Thomas De Quincey. — In Thomas De Quincey (1785–1859) the romantic element is even more pronounced. He was one of the earliest converts to the ideas of Wordsworth and Coleridge, and lived neighbor to Wordsworth for twenty years at Grasmere. There he read a prodigious number of books, ate vast quantities of opium, and dreamed the most glorious and most terrible dreams. His *Confessions of an Opium Eater* is an extended autobiography from his earliest recollections down to the time when he became an absolute slave of the opium habit (1819). *Susperia de Profundis* (Sighs from the Depths), a sequel to *The Opium Eater*, tells of the wandering of his mind when under the spell of the drug. It is a gloomy and terrible series of dreams, of which *Lavana and Our Ladies of Sorrow* is the most widely known. *The English Mail Coach* is also a dream product. It relates that, when De Quincey was riding one night on the top of His Majesty's mail, the coach collided with a frail carriage containing a pair of lovers. The horror and anguish

of the catastrophe, especially the vision of the girl in terror of death, entered into his dreams, appearing again and again in unexpected and weird dream combinations.

De Quincey's Critical Works. — The most important of De Quincey's critical works are *On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth* (1823), *Murder Considered as a Fine Art* (1827), and *Literary Reminiscences*. The *Reminiscences* contain appreciations of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lamb, Shelley, Keats, and other literary figures of the Romantic School, many of whom De Quincey knew personally and in some cases intimately.

De Quincey's Style — De Quincey's style is luxuriant and full of romantic coloring — highly imaginative prose. The range of his vocabulary was exceeded only by that of Shakespeare and Milton, and he used that vocabulary with the finest precision. His style is richly figurative, and moves along with a stately rhythm which gives it many of the emotional qualities of verse. The diffuseness of his writing, however, is often irritating to the reader who is impatient of digressions. De Quincey often stops for incidental, even trivial remarks, and is sometimes led far afield by his wayward fancy. It has been well said of him: "He illustrates both the defects and the virtues of the romantic temper; its virtues in the enkindled splendor of his fancy and the impassioned sweep of his style; its defects in his extravagance, his unevenness, his failure to exercise adequate self-criticism."

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING¹

Gray: *Elegy in a Country Church Yard*.

Burns: *Poems*.

Carlyle: *Essay on Burns*.

¹ All these readings may be found in the Pocket Series of English Classics published by The Macmillan Company.

Coleridge: *The Ancient Mariner*, *Kubla Khan*, and *Christabel*.

Wordsworth: *Shorter Poems*.

Byron: *Childe Harold*, Books III and IV.

Shelley and Keats: *Selections from Shelley and Keats*.

Lamb: "Old China," "A Dissertation on Roast Pig," and
"Dream Children" in *Essays of Elia*.

De Quincey: *The English Mail Coach*.

Scott: *Marmion*, *The Lady of the Lake*, *Ivanhoe*, *Kenilworth*.

CHAPTER VII

THE VICTORIAN ERA

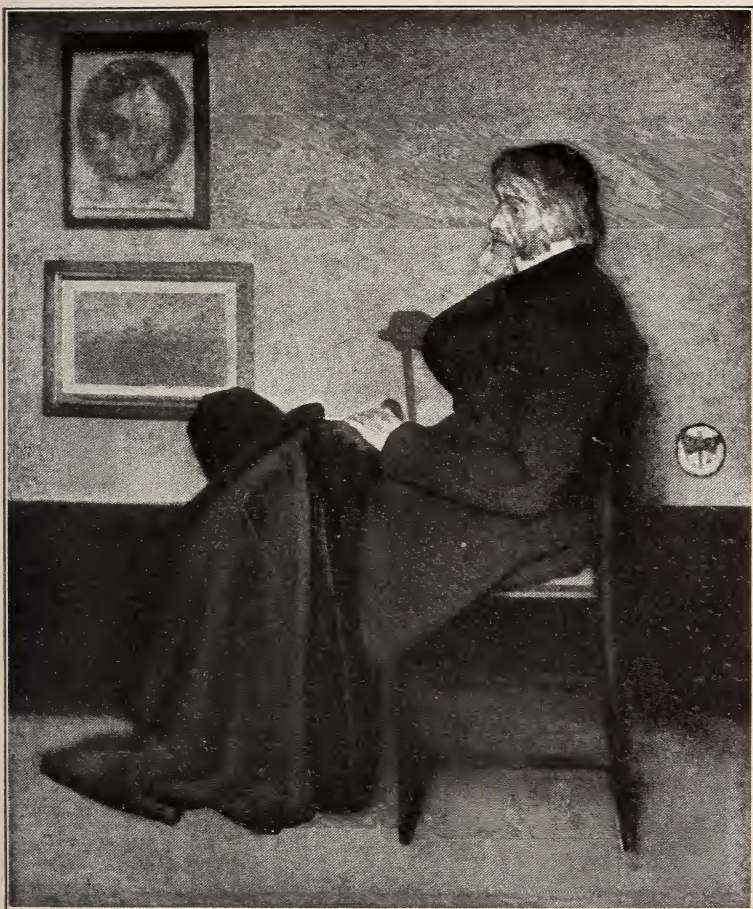
Characteristics of the Victorian Era. — We have seen that, in the age of classicism, the emphasis in literature was placed upon reason and common sense. The primary appeal was to the intellect. Imagination and emotion had an incidental place. In the Romantic period the reverse was true. Imagination and emotion were emphasized. Reason and common sense often gave way to extravagance and excess. In the Victorian Era both influences are strong, and run side by side throughout the century, each modifying and restraining the excess of the other. The literature of reason is less rigid and formal; the literature of the imagination, less extravagant and unreal. It is difficult to say which group is of greatest importance : Macaulay, Thackeray, Darwin, and George Eliot ; or Carlyle, Tennyson, Browning, and Stevenson. Nor is it always easy to classify authors, for the two streams of influence often came together, particularly in the greatest men. The case is not so easy with George Eliot and Alfred Tennyson as with Macaulay and Stevenson. George Eliot is not a thoroughgoing realist in spite of her own professions. Alfred Tennyson's romanticism was much modified by the investigations of science ; he accepted without hesitation the principles of Evolution. Yet the prevailing attitude toward life of Macaulay, Thackeray, Darwin, and George Eliot is distinctly intellectual ; that of Carlyle, Tennyson, Browning, and Stevenson, imaginative and

spiritual. It must be remembered, however, that the greater the writer, the harder it is to classify him.

Seeming Decline of Romanticism. — At the time of the death of Scott (1832), the great romantic impulse seemed to have spent itself. Byron, Shelley, and Keats were dead. Coleridge's "shaping spirit of imagination" had departed from him, and he wrote but little great poetry afterward. Wordsworth's best work was already done. The world seemed sinking back into a commonplace, matter-of-fact existence. But romanticism only changed its point of view; it did not die out. There was a marked revival of interest in reason and fact, but it did not entirely displace the interest in the things of the spirit. At the very beginning of the new era, each interest had its champion. Thomas Babington Macaulay was the brilliant intellectual exponent of the things of the sense, the world of affairs. Thomas Carlyle was the great preacher of the things of the spirit, of the world of ideals.

Macaulay was preëminently a man of affairs, a man of the most brilliant intellectual powers, but of meager spirituality. He was a member of parliament, a wit, an orator, an essayist, an historian. He was eminently practical, ready to accept things as they were and make the best of them. His interest was primarily in politics and government, and in commerce and industry. His chief reliance in life was on ballot-boxes and machinery. He is a typical exponent of the practical and purely intellectual side of nineteenth-century life.

Macaulay's Prose Works. — With the exception of *The Days of Ancient Rome* — celebrations in verse of the ancient civic virtues of the Romans — Macaulay's literary work was almost exclusively in prose. His literary fame began with the essay on Milton, published in *The Edinburgh Review* in 1825. Other literary essays are those on Addison, Bacon,



THOMAS CARLYLE.
After the portrait by James McNeil Whistler.

and Dr. Johnson, all of whom interested him largely because they were in touch with practical everyday life. Among his essays and addresses on public men, the most important are those on William Pitt, Lord Clive, and Warren Hastings. They are remarkable for clear statements, apt illustrations, skillful emphases, strong contrasts, striking antitheses, rapid and graphic narration. Biography and history were his specialties, and he brought to them a breadth of reading and a power of memory rarely surpassed. His most extensive work, *The History of England from the Accession of James II*, only five volumes of which were completed, shows Macaulay's prejudices, and is full of exaggerations; yet, because of its clear and brilliant style, it took hold of the public like a novel. Indeed, it was Macaulay's conscious purpose to appeal to the novel reading public.

Carlyle's Philosophy of Life. — The work of Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881) is a vigorous protest against the attitude toward life represented by Macaulay. Carlyle lifted his voice in awful warning against the worship of machinery and of the ballot-box. He could not accept things as they were with mild complacency, because he thought there was need of radical reform. He was not a politician, however, but a prophet and a seer, a man not of compromises, but of ideals. Macaulay was interested in the machinery of life; Carlyle, in the great spiritual forces at work behind the machinery, without which the machinery would be dead. Like Coleridge, he steeped himself in German idealism, though he took his idealism not from the abstract philosophies, as Coleridge did, but from the more concrete literary embodiments, especially from the works of Goethe; and whereas Coleridge was the first expounder of German idealism, or transcendentalism, in England, Carlyle was its great propagandist. Carlyle's ideas are best expressed, perhaps, in his clothes-

philosophy, explained at length in *Sartor Resartus*. From one point of view this book is an attack against shams, and a plea for sincerity. Laws, customs, social forms, even religious creeds are only the clothes in which the spirit of man arrays itself. The great realities are the spiritual realities. The outward forms in which the spirit manifests itself are comparatively unimportant. Carlyle complains that men forget the spirit, and foolishly worship the forms. The developing spirit of man, he says, outgrows its clothes; and when outgrown, the old clothes should be cast aside. There is nothing sacred about laws or creeds. As long as they fitly clothe and truthfully represent the spirit, well and good; but when they have become outworn or outgrown, away with them. Let us have no sham customs, no sham creeds. From another point of view, the book is constructive rather than destructive. The physical universe is the visible garment of God — a conception of nature not altogether unlike Wordsworth's. Behind the garment is the genuine spiritual reality. Carlyle considered the man foolish and narrow who thought only of the texture and style of the garment, and cared not to know the personality within.

Carlyle's Purposes. — All this is plain romantic doctrine, but Carlyle is trying to bring to it a clearer moral purpose. Like the earlier romanticists, he repudiates the world's old clothes; this is his *Everlasting Nay*. But he would not have the world without clothes. Make new and more suitable clothes for the human spirit and weave them in the loom of life; this is his *Everlasting Yea*. Here emerges Carlyle's Gospel of Work. Carlyle preaches the task of the nineteenth-century idealism, *i.e.*, to infuse into romanticism a great moral purpose, and construct a livable world which is at once both ideal and real.

History and Biography. — In his views about government,

Carlyle was not genuinely democratic, and in this he differs from his revolutionary predecessors. One of his cardinal doctrines was "government by the best." Democracy he thought to be "government by the worst." Carlyle was a hero worshiper, and his *Heroes and Hero-Worship* is one of his most significant books. He took no stock in the judgment and insight of the masses. To him the real problem of life was to find out the superior, God-inspired men, the genuine heroes, and to follow them. Carlyle is, therefore, in constant search of great personalities. History, to him, was but a series of biographies of great men. Like Macaulay, most of his work has to do with biography and history. Yet both his point of view and his method are different. Macaulay was interested in what men did; Carlyle, in what men actually were. One emphasizes events; the other, personality. Macaulay's *History of England* is a well-planned, progressive narrative of events. Carlyle's *History of the French Revolution* is a drama in which great personalities such as Mirabeau display their power in scenes of confusion. In biography, Carlyle's work is far more sympathetic and penetrating than Macaulay's, as a comparison of their essays on Dr. Johnson shows. *The History of Frederick the Great* is Carlyle's most stupendous, perhaps his greatest biographical work. The most appreciative and sympathetic of his shorter sketches is the *Essay on Burns*.

(a) REALISM

The Realistic Novel. — Carlyle's protest against his time was vigorous and influential, but it did not stop realistic tendencies, as the development of the nineteenth-century novel attests. Back in the romantic period Jane Austen had made a more or less conscious protest against the extravagance of Mrs. Radcliffe and "Monk" Lewis in her

novels of manners, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Mansfield Park*, and *Emma*. And now in the middle of the nineteenth century the effort to treat everyday life in the novel is further emphasized by Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, and George Eliot.

Dickens's Character Creations. — Charles Dickens (1812-1870) was a representative everyday Englishman. He lived very close to the public, and knew well how to represent it and to speak for it. He began life as a reporter, and later became an editor, amateur actor, and public reader. As reporter he studied his public, as actor and reader he learned how to play upon it. Early in his career he began to write sketches of London life, mostly caricatures. Urged on by their success, he invented the "Pickwick Club," and worked out a large book of sketches, *The Pickwick Papers*, a book without any careful plan, but full of comic figures. Later, he conceived grotesque and terrible characters: Fagin and Sykes in *Oliver Twist* (1838), Quilp in *Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), and Madam Defarge in *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859). His child characters, too, are famous, Little Nell, Oliver Twist, David Copperfield, pathetic and abused little creatures. The stories are often carelessly constructed; indeed, many of them were written and published in installments, Dickens himself not knowing at the beginning how the story was to end. But the characters are always inimitable. Dickens was a great showman, with an inexhaustible supply of figures, humorous and pathetic, vicious and innocent.

Dickens as a Reformer. — His work has also distinct moral purpose. Dickens attacked public abuses, and sought to redress wrongs. His stories aided many a reform. *Oliver Twist* attacks the workhouse; *Bleak House*, the chancery court; *Little Dorrit*, the debtor's prisons. *Dombey and*

Son and *Nicholas Nickleby*, by exposing the cruelties practiced in English schools, helped to put a stop to the shameful exploitation of innocent children. Indeed, the memory of Dickens's own bitter childhood is at the root of his opposition to social injustice and of his zeal for reform. It is easy to find fault with the work of Dickens. His characters are not so much portraits as caricatures. His plots are often formless. Mistakes in English may be found on almost every page. Yet he was the most popular writer of his day, and the hundredth anniversary of his birth hardly finds his fame diminished. He lived close to the popular life. He had rare sympathy and insight. He knew well how to produce laughter and horror and tears.

Thackeray's Attitude toward Life. — William Makepeace Thackeray (1811–1863) likewise wrote novels of real life, but his point of view differed from that of Dickens. Dickens was a man of the common people; Thackeray, of the drawing-room and the club. Thackeray was the easy-going satirist of social life, drawing intellectual inspiration from the classicism of the eighteenth century. He represents the common-sense point of view of the critical clubman, not caring to make the world over, but accepting it as it is with all its irregularities, and laughing at it in a manner a little patronizing. He despises hypocrisy and sham, but does not employ invective as Carlyle does. His method is subtle, suggestive, and insinuating, without being cynical. He does not despise human nature as the true cynic does, but believes rather in its essential worth. The simple goodness of Colonel Newcome, for example, is treated with genuine sympathy, though not with the frank simplicity of Dickens. Thackeray is more critical, and maintains always a half-smiling reserve.

His Novels. — Thackeray's novels show a thorough knowl-

edge of life and literature in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. *Henry Esmond* and its sequel, *The Virginians*, picture English social life from the time of Addison to the time of the war for American independence. *English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century* shows a keen appreciation of the literature. Life in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century is treated in *Pendennis*, *The Newcomes*, and *Vanity Fair*. The development of these stories is desultory and haphazard, *Henry Esmond* alone being carefully wrought out. The characters, too, are not so carefully analyzed as those of George Eliot, for instance, are. Thackeray had no scientific and philosophical ideas of novel writing, no elaborate theory of realism, no set of principles. He simply had a clear vision and a critical judgment, a genius for significant details, a chatty and confidential manner. He avoided fundamental spiritual conflicts and problems; but for a vivid picture of English social manners and customs in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, as seen from the point of view of a common-sense man of the world, there is perhaps no better place to go than to the novels of Thackeray.

Henry Esmond shows Thackeray at his best. Esmond is a character of dignity and worth, an honorable and loyal English gentleman, who is allowed to tell his own story from his own essentially noble point of view. Moreover, Thackeray's sympathetic knowledge of the eighteenth century gives the book peculiar reality and warmth. "The vanished world lives for us in character and in episode; lives with a dignity and richness of conception and style that shows Thackeray to have been, when he chose, the greatest artist among the English novelists."¹

George Eliot's Realism. — George Eliot (1819–1880) took

¹ Moody and Lovett, *History of English Literature*.

the art of novel writing far more seriously than Thackeray did. Thackeray did not scorn to gossip about life. George Eliot strove earnestly to interpret it. Her stories arose for the most part out of her real experiences, and her characters were often suggested by real people. *Adam Bede*, for example, was suggested by an incident in the life of her aunt, who was the original of Dinah Morris, the woman preacher. Mrs. Poyser is supposed to have traits of George Eliot's mother. Cabel Garth in *Middlemarch* is like her father. There is much that is autobiographical in Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss*. George Eliot's earlier stories of rustic life have great reality and freshness, but she was not content to give us a mere photograph of life. She must uncover the hidden springs of action and discuss moral problems as an ethical teacher. Not content with surface reality, she must interpret the obvious facts philosophically and scientifically. She claimed to be a realist; and so she was to the extent that she gave no false idea of life, did not exaggerate life for effect, or color it, or throw it out of true perspective. But her books are not mirrors of life. Her sympathetic imagination plays around it all, and facts are always used for a conscious moral purpose. *Silas Marner*, for instance, treats of the regeneration of character. Hardened and embittered by unjust suspicion, Silas is later humanized through the influence of love. Love will heal a morbid nature, is the theme. The story also illustrates the law of life that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." *Romola* is a psychologic study of the degeneration of character in Tito. George Eliot's purpose is to show that ethical law is as inexorable as physical law.

Structure and Style.—In structure and style, George Eliot was more painstaking than either Dickens or Thackeray. Her stories were first thoughtfully planned, and then

carefully elaborated. Every effect was calculated. Especially were suspense and contrast consciously and skillfully applied. The backgrounds for the action are fully developed. The characters talk with absolute realism. The descriptions of Warwickshire, where her early novels are localized, are painstakingly exact. The language of rustic characters like Mrs. Poyser truly smack of the soil.

The novels most interesting as stories, are *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss*, and *Silas Marner*. In later novels, the philosophical and moral purpose interferes with the story interest. *Romola* and *Middlemarch* show Eliot's great learning, but lack the freshness and reality of her early work. *Daniel Deronda*, although regarded by Eliot as her greatest book, is too analytical and moralizing to suit most readers of fiction. As a whole, however, her books represent the highest development in English of realistic fiction with a purpose.

Meredith's Novels. — George Meredith (1828–1909) began to write as early as George Eliot, but his books did not find a wide public, until the end of the Victorian Era. Like George Eliot he was a psychologist, a moralist, and interpreter of life. His realism, however, is not so pronounced as George Eliot's. His characters are not always so clearly individualized. Indeed, as in *The Egoist*, they are often frankly presented as types. Nor does Meredith always take pains to have the dialogue true to life. He feels that his men and women must be made essentially human, but he cares more for typical than for individual peculiarities, and is willing to compress his dialogue more highly and weight it more heavily with meaning than would be possible in actual life. His thought, too, is often complicated and his style abrupt. But to the practiced reader his books are significant and stimulating. He teaches his moral lessons more often through

comedy than through tragedy, making vice ridiculous rather than terrible. His most notable novels are *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859), *Beauchamp's Career* (1876), *The Egoist* (1879), and *Diana of the Crossways* (1885).

The Science Movement. — A further realistic movement which influenced profoundly though indirectly the literature of the Victorian Era is the development of science, especially the theory of evolution as made known to the world by Charles Darwin in *The Origin of Species* (1859). Other scientific writers were Lyell, Huxley, Tyndall, and Wallace. The conclusions of geology and biology which the work of these men represent changed the whole conception of life. The great popular preacher of the movement was Huxley. His *Autobiography* and *Lay Sermons, Addresses, and Reviews* are free from learned technicalities and are carefully and elaborately exemplified and illustrated. They are perhaps, for the general reader, the clearest and most readable scientific books of this period.

(b) IDEALISM

Religious Movements. — These realistic and scientific tendencies, however, did not monopolize the thought of the period. The romantic spirit was still alive and active. The German idealism, which Coleridge had introduced, and Carlyle had so loudly preached, continued influential. At the University of Cambridge, Julius Hare, afterwards arch-deacon, and Frederick Maurice, preacher and writer, formed the center of a group of so-called Coleridgeans, and, more important still, at Oxford there was the great spiritual revival known as The Oxford Movement. Alarmed at the growing materialism of English thought, at the prevailing mechanical conception of life, and at the lack of spirituality in the church, where the conventional notions of the eight-

eenth century still lingered, a group of men under the leadership of John Henry Newman sought to bring back the moral enthusiasm and spiritual mystery of the early church.

This movement owed much to the romanticists. In his *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, Newman himself tells how largely he drew inspiration from them :

“What will best describe my state of mind at the early part of 1839, is an Article in the British Critic for that April. . . . After stating the phenomenon of the time, as it presented itself to those who did not sympathize in it, the Article proceeds to account for it ; and this it does by considering it as a re-action from the dry and superficial character of the religious teaching and the literature of the last generation, or century, and as a result of the need which was felt both by the hearts and the intellects of the nation for a deeper philosophy, and as the evidence and the partial fulfilment of that need, to which even the chief authors of the then generation had borne witness. First, I mentioned the literary influence of Walter Scott, who turned men’s minds in the direction of the middle ages. ‘The general need,’ I said, ‘of something deeper and more attractive, than what had offered itself elsewhere, may be considered to have led to his popularity ; and by means of his popularity he re-acted on his readers, stimulating their mental thirst, feeding their hopes, setting before them visions, which, when once seen, are not easily forgotten, and silently indoctrinating them with nobler ideas, which might afterwards be appealed to as principles.’

“Then I spoke of Coleridge, thus : ‘While history in prose and verse was thus made the instrument of Church feelings and opinions, a philosophical basis for the same was laid in England by a very original thinker, who, while he indulged a liberty of speculation which no Christian can tolerate, and advocated conclusions which were often heathen rather than Christian, yet after all installed a higher philosophy into inquiring minds, than they had hitherto been accustomed to accept. In this way he made trial of his age, and succeeded in interesting its genius in the cause of Catholic truth.’

“Then come Southey and Wordsworth, ‘two living poets, one of whom in the department of fantastic fiction, the other in that of philosophical meditation, have addressed themselves to the same high principles and feelings, and carried forward their readers in the same direction.’”¹

“**Apologia pro Vita Sua.**” — This romantic tendency in Newman led him to the love of mystery and the spiritual longing of medieval Christianity, and thence to the faith of the primitive church. The movement which he championed drifted into a stormy theological controversy, and finally collapsed, Newman and some of his followers passing over to the Roman Catholic Church. Still, imaginative and spiritual interests were greatly stimulated and literature incidentally influenced, though with the exception of a few hymns like *Lead Kindly Light*, the only direct contribution to genuine literature made by the movement is the autobiography of Newman, *Apologia pro Vita Sua*. Newman’s theological ideas do not command a wide popular interest, but his strong spiritual personality and admirably clear and beautiful style make his book an undoubted contribution to real literature.

Arnold’s Attitude toward Life. — Matthew Arnold (1822–1888) shows both romantic and classical tendencies. The mantle of Thomas Carlyle is said to have fallen upon him, but he wore it with a decided difference. Like Carlyle he hated the crass materialism of his time. Those who held the machine view of life, who relied upon ballot-boxes, steam-engines, and trade, he called philistines, enemies of the children of light; and he was never weary of inveighing against them. He was not, however, a genuine romanticist. Indeed, his whole thinking was deeply colored with classical ideas. He was a “wanderer between two worlds.” He

¹ Newman, *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, pp. 76–77.

had romantic inspirations, but revolted against romantic formlessness and extravagance. Carlyle prayed for light; Arnold, for "sweetness and light." Carlyle preached the value of conduct. Arnold added the complementary virtue of open-mindedness, reasonableness, culture. Culture, "the knowledge of the best which has been thought and done in the world," was to Arnold the panacea for all ills — the road of deliverance in religion, politics, education, and literature. This classical idea of the well-rounded nature, perfect symmetry of life, is his fundamental doctrine. He fought the narrow-mindedness and self-satisfaction of the rising middle class. He preached, in season and out of season, "the study of perfection." These ideas are clearly developed in *Culture and Anarchy* and *Literature and Dogma*.

Literature vs. Science. — In education, Arnold was a great champion of the study of literature, "the best which has been thought and said in the world." He was jealous of the encroachments of what he called the "instrumental knowledges" into the curriculum of the schools. He thought that literature best met the fundamental demand of human nature to relate knowledge to "the sense of conduct" and to "the sense of beauty." He believed, therefore, that literature and not science should constitute the bulk of education for the majority of mankind, and he entered into a very lively controversy with Huxley upon this subject. Huxley's *Science and Culture*, originally delivered as an address at the opening of Sir Josiah Mason's College, Birmingham, is the argument for science. *Literature and Science*, one of Arnold's American addresses, contains the argument for literature.

Arnold's Literary Criticism. — In literary criticism also Arnold sought the middle way between the real and the ideal. He appreciated the romantic impulses, but was not swept away by passion and by mystic vision. He stood for

sanity, "sweet reasonableness," moderation, symmetry, balance. His first famous piece of criticism is his essay *On Translating Homer*. Among his best critical essays are those on Wordsworth and Byron in *Essays in Criticism*, and that on Emerson in *Discourses in America*. Arnold was the literary dictator of his day.

Arnold's poetry, likewise, is midway between the classical and the romantic. His poems are never extravagant or mystical. They err rather in the direction of restraint. Arnold tried to unite romantic feeling with classical purity of form and style. *Sohrab and Rustum*, *The Scholar Gypsy*, and *Thyrsis* are good examples. *Dover Beach*, a beautiful and exquisite lyric, shows particularly well Arnold's restraint in the treatment of nature. Like Wordsworth he loved the sublime calm of nature as opposed to the turmoil of human life, but he did not find nature so full of moral meaning as Wordsworth did. Arnold's view was more scientific.

Arnold's general poetic mood is melancholy rather than serene. Unfortunately he had no great message of inspiration and faith. Life was full of sadness, renunciation, and despair. *Dover Beach* is a characteristic expression of his prevailing mood. After speaking of "the eternal note of sadness" in the wash of the waves on the beach, he continues:

"Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Ægean, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

"The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.

But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

“Ah, love, let us be true
To one another ! for the world which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain ;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.”

Ruskin's Writings on Art. — John Ruskin (1819–1900) was likewise a mediator between the ideal and the real. As we have already seen, one of the most striking characteristics of the romanticism of the middle of the nineteenth century was its moral purpose, the effort to democratize the things of the imagination and the spirit, and to open the eyes of commonplace Englishmen to the spiritual meaning of life; in other words to make romanticism practical. Ruskin pushed this propaganda with something of the intensity of Carlyle, of whom he was an acknowledged follower. His early energy was devoted to art. *Modern Painters*, his first book, discusses the underlying principles of landscape painting. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* and *Stones of Venice* have to do with architecture. Ruskin believed that all genuine art has its source in the moral nature of the artist, and represents the moral temper of the nation in which it is produced. His mission was to preach the spiritual meaning of art, which he exalted above mere technique. He did more than any of his contemporaries to broaden the appre-

ciation of art, and thus to temper the prevailing materialism of English thought.

"Unto this Last." — In his later life he devoted himself to the larger criticism of life. During his study of art he had become convinced that great art expresses the national life, and is therefore dependent upon the health and beauty of society as a whole. He believed that the debased condition of art in his day in England was due to the industrial organization of society, to the emphasis upon machinery, to the prevalence of purely commercial standards of life, to the worship of the "Goddess of getting-on." He therefore became an economic and social reformer. *Unto this Last* (1862) contains his ideas of reform in political economy. He begins with the central idea of wealth, and inquires what wealth is. The real wealth of a nation, he says, is not money, but men. A man's soul is more important than his pocketbook. A political economy which considers only the accumulation and distribution of material wealth, neglecting the human element, is narrowing and debasing to the nation. He wishes a political economy which shall give attention to the production of healthy, happy, useful men. His ideas are distinctly socialistic. He pleads: (1) for government training schools to teach young men and women the trades by which they shall live, in addition to the laws of health and the principles of justice; (2) for government farms and workshops, where the necessities of life shall be produced, honest work demanded, and a just standard of wages maintained; (3) for a government guarantee of work for the unemployed; (4) for adequate provision for the sick and the aged. Ruskin did much to emphasize the idea of social justice, which has commanded so much attention since Ruskin's time.

Other Works. — Ruskin's most popular works are *Sesame*

and *Lilies*, which proclaims the gospel of spiritual wealth, especially as deposited in books, and *The Crown of Wild Olive*, a series of lectures to workingmen on Work, Traffic, and War. *Fors Clavigera* contains some of his ripest teaching. *Præterita*, his autobiography, gives an especially delightful account of his boyhood and youth.

Tennyson's Early Poetry. — Each of the writers thus far discussed, Carlyle, Arnold, Ruskin, Macaulay, Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, represents some important phase of nineteenth-century literature, but none of them represents the age more completely than Alfred Tennyson. He touched the thought of the time at many points, puzzled over its problems, came close to its struggle between doubt and faith. His early tendencies were romantic: he was brought up in the country under all the influences of nature; his young mind was steeped in ballad and romance; Byron was one of his youthful idols. Some of the best of his early poems such as *The Lady of Shalott* and *Recollections of the Arabian Nights* have all the atmosphere of pure romance. *The Palace of Art* shows his relation to the new moral tendencies, his wish to be a teacher as well as a singer. The volume of 1842 shows even finer qualities of romance in *Sir Galahad*, *Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere*, and *Morte d'Arthur*. Classical interests are shown in *Ænone*, *The Lotus Eaters*, and *Ulysses*. Already, to romantic fervor of imagination and atmospheric charm was added a classical sense of form and finish. A tendency to treat real problems of life appears in *The Palace of Art*, *St. Simeon Stylites*, and *The Vision of Sin*. *The Princess* (1845) is a half-playful, half-earnest contribution to the question of the higher education of women.

Science and Faith. — At the same time Tennyson was struggling with deeper problems. In 1833 his dearest friend,

Arthur Hallam, died. Grief for this friend brought Tennyson face to face with the mystery of death, and with the question of immortality. It plunged him into the midst of the great nineteenth-century struggle between science and faith. The new developments of science in the direction of the principles of evolution appealed to his keen, strong intellect; but the conclusions of science seemed to destroy some of the most cherished doctrines of the Christian faith, and Tennyson's nature was profoundly religious. How to reconcile science and faith was the great problem of the time. It now became Tennyson's personal problem. Did the truths of science actually belie revelation and deny immortality? Could he accept evolution, and still maintain his Christian faith? The record of his struggle with this problem and what he felt to be a triumphant conclusion is given in *In Memoriam* (1850), a series of lyrics written at various times after 1833, showing the progress of his experiences from grief and despair to a larger human sympathy and a surer Christian faith. He came to believe that scientific truth and spiritual truth are not antagonistic but complementary, each as real as the other. To be sure new scientific truth made it necessary to modify old creeds, but it did not destroy spirituality nor remove the necessity of faith. He sums up this belief in the introduction to *In Memoriam*.

“Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove;

“We have but faith: we cannot know;
For knowledge is of things we see;
And yet we trust it comes from thee,
A beam in darkness: let it grow.

“Let knowledge grow from more to more,
 But more of reverence in us dwell;
 That mind and soul, according well,
 May make one music as before,

“But vaster.”

Estimates of “In Memoriam.” — *In Memoriam* is the most representative poem of the experience of the nineteenth century. All recognize this, though the poem has come to various readers with varying degrees of satisfaction and finality. Some think it represents only the inadequate conclusions of a bewildered age, and speak of it disparagingly as representing “the great Victorian compromise.” Others, like Tennyson himself, have seen in it the triumphant reconciliation of science and faith.

“The Idylls of the King.” — Another of Tennyson’s masterpieces, thought by some to be as great as *In Memoriam*, is *The Idylls of the King*, a series of romances on the Arthurian material, which has haunted the imagination of Englishmen since the Norman Conquest. Here again the moral purpose of nineteenth-century romanticism is evident. The stories are told with the avowed purpose of treating modern spiritual problems. Tennyson says in the dedication to the queen:

“Accept this old imperfect tale,
 New-old, and shadowing Sense at war with Soul;
 Ideal manhood closed in real man,
 Rather than that gray king, whose name, a ghost,
 Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from mountain peak,
 And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still; or him
 Of Geoffrey’s book, or him of Malleor’s.”

The poem is not an allegory in any strict sense, but the stories are so modified as to represent the great struggle in

life between material and spiritual forces — another form of the theme of *In Memoriam*.

Theme of the Idylls. — Tennyson was interested in the Arthurian legends all his life. As a boy he played that he was a Knight of the Round Table. Among his earliest poems was *The Lady of Shalott* and other lyrics on Arthurian themes. In 1842 came *Morte d'Arthur*, afterwards to be made a part of the completed Idylls under the name of *The Passing of Arthur*. At first he was interested only in the stories as such. Even as late as 1859, when *Enid*, *Vivien*, *Elaine*, and *Guinevere* were published, his idea was merely to present contrast pictures between false and true types of womanhood. Not till 1869 was the epic character of the series worked out. The theme was then developed of an ideal society gradually destroyed by the forces of sensuality and mysticism. The influence of these two destructive forces running through the series gives the unity to the poem. Tennyson took the middle conservative ground between materialism and extravagant romanticism. *The Holy Grail* shows how his ideas differed from medieval ideas, or even from the ideas of the early nineteenth-century romanticists. The duty of man is not to make an ideal world for himself apart from real life. Tennyson's ideal is neither ascetic or mystical. He actually condemns the quest of the Holy Grail as a following after wandering fires, when men should be struggling to overcome the evil in the world.

Tennyson's Spiritual Triumph. — Essentially, then, Tennyson was a great religious poet. He preached the practical application of religious faith to modern thought and conduct. He had a positive spiritual message for a time which certainly needed such a message. As he grew old his spiritual experience deepened and at the end he was able to say triumphantly:

"I have climb'd to the snows of Age, and I gaze at a field in the Past,
Where I sank with the body at times in the sloughs of a low desire.
But I hear no yelp of the beast, and the man is quiet at last
As he stands on the heights of his life with a glimpse of a height
that is higher."

His calm departure from life is told in *Crossing the Bar*, one of his last poems.

Robert Browning. — Side by side with Tennyson in greatness, though not so popular a representative of his age, stands Robert Browning (1812-1889). He, too, cherished romantic traditions. He was an idealist and an optimist, a great spiritual poet, a poet of love and faith. His poetry is not so easy to read as Tennyson's, because he was not so great a master of style, and because he takes so much for granted on the part of the reader, who must read between and behind the lines, before a poem can really be understood. He had, however, a more vigorous mind and an equally high moral earnestness. His poetry is highly stimulating to many who see in Tennyson's poems more beauty than strength.

His Dramatic Qualities. — Browning was more dramatic than Tennyson. He did not write successful stage plays, but he was very keen in the analysis of his characters, and very successful in bringing out their point of view of life in dramatic monologue. *My Last Duchess* illustrates this. Only one person, a proud medieval duke, speaks; but both his character and the character of his wife, about whom he speaks, are made perfectly clear. Moreover between and behind the lines the reader sees a dramatic situation enacted.

Browning's range was wide. His characters belong to many countries and to various periods of history. His favorite method was to find some crisis point in the thinking of an entire age, imagine it as the crisis point in the experi-

ence of an individual, and then cause that person to develop the situation in monologue in such a way as to bring out Browning's own idea of the meaning and worth of life. *Saul* so presents the old Hebrew vision of the Messiah as to bring out Browning's idea of the significance of the love of God as revealed in Christ. *Cleon* treats of the despondency and vain longing of the Greek mind in the first century after Christ, when the vitality of both Greek religion and Greek literature had passed away. The theme is used by Browning to explain the weakness of the pagan conception of life, the emptiness of life without Christian ideals. *Andrea del Sarto* treats of the decadence of art in Italy, when painting was no longer represented by Raphael and Michael Angelo, but by such men as Andrea del Sarto, a painter perfect in technique, but with no large inspiration; an artist great of execution, but small of soul. The situation is used to explain Browning's idea that the basis of great art is in character rather than in skill, that no artist can be great without spiritual power. The same method is seen in *Caliban*, *A Death in the Desert*, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, and many other poems. No one has made so much of the dramatic monologue as Browning.

The Ring and the Book is his longest, perhaps his greatest, masterpiece. In it he has transformed the crude raw material of an old Italian murder trial into a great piece of art, interpreting profoundly the most fundamental passions and emotions. A single story is told from twelve different points of view, the most interesting of which are (1) the view of the husband, who defends the murder of his wife, (2) the view of the wife, who tells her story from her deathbed, (3) the view of the chivalrous priest, who relates how he tried to rescue the wife from the cruelty of her husband, and (4) the view of the Pope, who gives the final judgment in the case.

Browning's Fame. — Browning was slow in gaining a public, largely on account of the peculiarities of his style; but his intense and positive nature at last won an influence unusually strong and permanent. "The robustness of Browning's nature, its courage, its abounding joy and faith in life, make his works a permanent storehouse of spiritual energy for the race, a storehouse to which for a long time to come it will in certain moods always return. In an age distracted by doubt and divided in will, his strong unfaltering voice has been lifted above the perplexities and hesitations of men, like a bugle call to joyous battle in which the victory is to the brave."¹

Rossetti. — Romantic traditions were further continued in the Pre-Raphaelite movement, of which the most important literary figures are Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Morris. As the name Pre-Raphaelite implies, the movement at first had to do with painting rather than with literature. The aim was to choose ideal and even mystical subjects, and then paint them with painstaking attention to detail. The school stood for idealism in conception and realism in execution. As far as subject matter was concerned, inspiration came from the poetry of Keats, the old ballads and romances, and the mystical religion of Dante and the medieval church. The early Pre-Raphaelites were Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Francis Millais, and Henry Holman Hunt. Of these only Rossetti became prominent in literature. He was a great lover of Dante, and indeed of all the mystery and romance of the Middle Ages. His literary work consists largely of ballads and romances with the exception of his great sonnet sequence, *The House of Life*. His most passionate ballads are *Sister Helen* and *The King's Tragedy*. *The Blessed Damosel* illustrates particularly well the Pre-

¹ Moody and Lovett, *History of English Literature*.

Raphaelite union of spirituality in conception and concreteness and simplicity in the treatment of detail. As might be expected of a painter-poet, Rossetti's poems are marked by great picturesque beauty. Many of them, notably *The Blessed Damosel* and a large number of sonnets, are companion pieces to pictures on the same themes. Rossetti's world was a dream world richly visualized.

William Morris (1834-1896) was a follower of Rossetti, though not so mystical a thinker nor so sensuous an artist. He was, however, more versatile and practical. Besides being a painter and man of letters, he manufactured artistic furniture and many kinds of household decorations such as wall paper and tapestries. He also founded the famous Kelmscott Press for the production of artistic printing and bookbinding. His poetic career began in true romantic fashion with the passionate *Defense of Guinevere*, which was followed by a long series of romances in both poetry and prose. *The Earthly Paradise* is a collection of stories in verse taken from both classical and Icelandic myth and legend. One of the most spirited and sustained is *The Lovers of Gudrun*, taken from an old Icelandic saga. Interest in the literature of the North is further attested by *Sigurd the Volsung*, an epic founded on one of the old sagas, and by the prose romances, *The House of the Wolfings*, *The Story of the Glittering Plain*, and *The Roots of the Mountains*. Later in life Morris became a socialist. *The Dream of John Ball* and *News from Nowhere* are romances having to do with the problem of an ideal social state.

Stevenson's Romances. — At the close of the Victorian Era three important forms of literature were represented by three significant men: the prose romance, by Robert Louis Stevenson; poetry, by Algernon Charles Swinburne, and criticism, by Walter Pater. Robert Louis Stevenson

(1850-1894) wrote a small amount of poetry, notably poems of child life; but most of his work was in prose. He was primarily a story-teller who avoided the moral strenuousness of his age and reverted to the old romantic stories of adventure represented by the writings of Sir Walter Scott. *Treasure Island* is a tale of piracy and search for hidden treasure. *Kidnapped* and *David Balfour* relate the adventures of a youth who is kidnapped and sent to sea that he may be deprived of his inheritance, and who, after shipwreck and wandering, returns at last to claim and secure his rights. *The New Arabian Nights* is a collection of fantastic and extravagant stories in modern setting. The character work is never subtle, the emphasis being always upon the story. The structure and style are superior to Scott's. Description for its own sake is avoided. The story movement is more rapid, the diction more discriminating, the sentence structure firmer, the grace of style more pronounced.

Swinburne's Paganism. — Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909), the last of the great Victorian poets, stands somewhat apart from his age. He was not a moral and religious poet like Tennyson or Browning; on the contrary, he inveighed against Christianity. He did not find his chief inspiration in the mystery and superstition of the Middle Ages, although one of his best long narrative poems is *Tristram of Lyonesse*. His inspiration came chiefly from paganism. He was an impressionalist, giving way to self-indulgence and neglecting moral issues.

Swinburne's Poetic Style. — His poetic style is to most readers bewildering, for it is inexhaustibly rich in words and images. At times it is verbose. The charm of his poetry lies in his mastery of rhythm and rime. Sometimes the rich music of the verse is developed at the expense of the

thought. The reader is borne along by mere sensuous beauty independent of the meaning of the lines. The effect is that of verse music rather than of poetry. The best lyrics have to do with the sea and with the beauty and pathos of child life. One of his most finished longer poems is *Atalanta in Calydon*, a drama after the Greek model. "The action moves with stately swiftness, in obedience to the strict canons of Greek form; the pathos is deep and genuine; and the music, especially in the choruses, is splendid in range and sweep."

Walter Pater (1839-1894) was an impressionistic critic. He had a highly sensitive nature and gave himself to the analysis and explanation of his sensations. To him the entire world of experience was in a state of flux; nothing was fixed. His business was to catch the impression of the moment, and experience its full æsthetic effect. He was a highly refined pagan — an Epicurean in the best sense. He believed in life, abundant life, a life of various and select sensations. He was not opposed to harmony, discipline, and self-control; but he did not emphasize these as Matthew Arnold did. Pater would cultivate in every way the power to appreciate impressions and sensations. He became therefore an appreciative rather than a dogmatic critic of life and literature. His most characteristic writings are: *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), *Marius the Epicurean* (1885), *Imaginary Portraits* (1887), and *Appreciations* (1889). *Marius, the Epicurean* seems to contain much that is autobiographical.

Summary. — With Stevenson, Swinburne, and Pater the Victorian Era comes to an end. It was an age, as we have seen, rich in both prose and poetry, with influences both romantic and classical, both idealistic and materialistic. The great writers represent all the phases of a many-

sided national life. Macaulay was the brilliant historian of material progress; Carlyle, the preacher of idealism; Ruskin, the democratizer of art; Arnold, the analytical critic; Dickens, the champion of the lower classes; Thackeray, the mild satirist of high society; George Eliot, the philosophical interpreter of the laws of life; Browning, the poet of optimism; Tennyson, the poet of the struggle between science and faith. All of them show the intimate relation which exists between literature and life.

SUGGESTED READINGS¹

Macaulay: *Essay on Dr. Johnson.*

Essays on Milton and Addison.

Carlyle: *The Essay on Burns.*

Heroes and Hero-Worship, Lecture I.

Dickens: *A Tale of Two Cities.*

Thackeray: *Henry Esmond.*

George Eliot: *Silas Marner.*

Arnold: *Sohrab and Rustum.*

Huxley: *Selections from Lay Sermons.*

Ruskin: *Sesame and Lilies.*

The King of the Golden River.

Tennyson: *Idylls of the King.*

Browning: *Shorter Poems.*

Morris: *The Lovers of Gudrun in The Earthly Paradise, The Story of the Glittering Plain* (published by Longmans, Green and Co.).

Stevenson: *Treasure Island, Kidnapped.*

¹ Except where special editions are mentioned, the books may be had in the Pocket Series of English Classics published by The Macmillan Company.

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¹ The asterisk indicates that the book is especially valuable.

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<i>The Odyssey</i> , transl. by Palmer, Houghton.....	.75
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<i>The Mabinogion</i> , transl. by Lady Guest, (Everyman's Lib.), Dutton35

PART II

A BRIEF SURVEY OF AMERICAN
LITERATURE

CHAPTER VIII

EARLY AMERICAN LITERATURE

The First Settlers. — The early settlers in America came from England at two distinct periods in her history, which were characterized by different intellectual and social conditions. Naturally, therefore, they established in the new world two distinct types of civilization. The settlers who came to Virginia in 1607 were Elizabethan Englishmen, contemporaries of Shakespeare. They were bold, daring men with a certain flavor of romance about them. Some were moved by the spirit of adventure merely. Some were gentlemen of broken fortune in search of easily acquired wealth. A few were idlers and criminals. They did not expect to make their homes in the new world, but hoped soon to return to England rich and influential. The Pilgrims, on the other hand, who settled in Plymouth in 1620, and the Puritans, who established the Massachusetts Bay Colony a few years later, came from an England which had already been largely transformed by the new religious influences of Puritanism. They were stern men of strong religious principles, lovers of freedom, exiles, seeking in an unknown and inhospitable land a place where they could establish permanent homes, live independent lives, and worship God in their own way. They were inspired not by dreams of wealth but by dreams of freedom.

Conditions Unfavorable for Literature. — In neither case were conditions favorable for the development of literature. The New Englanders were too busy cutting down the

forests, building houses, clearing the fields of stumps and rocks, planting and cultivating crops, and defending their lives against wild beasts and Indians, to spend much time in writing books. Among the Virginians the conditions of life were easier, but the population did not settle in village communities favorable to the intellectual contact and extended education which develop a literary class. Nor did they live under the primitive conditions which develop such popular traditional literature as the old English ballads and romances. After exploring the country and finding that wealth could not be gained in a day, they took up large landed estates, and cultivated vast tobacco plantations. They lived the active life of the open air in close contact with nature, given to free and open hospitality when opportunity served, but little inclined to study and reflection. They developed a literature even less rapidly than the Pilgrims and Puritans.

(a) HISTORICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL WRITING

John Smith (1579–1631). — The earliest writing was historical and biographical. The colonists sent back to England descriptions of the country and accounts of their frontier life. Captain John Smith, for example, wrote for the purpose of advertising Virginia. In 1608 he sent to a friend in London *A True Relation of such Occurrences and Accidents of Noate as Happened in Virginia since the first Planting of that Colony*, and later, in 1624, published his *General History of Virginia*. Smith was a typical Elizabethan Englishman. His account, therefore, is enthusiastic and often exaggerated. Sometimes, also, he enlivens it with the interest of romance. *The History of Virginia* contains, for example, the famous story of how, when Smith was

about to be killed by the Indians, his life was saved by the Indian Princess, Pocahontas.

“Having feasted him after their best barbarous manner, a long consultation was held; but the conclusion was, two great stones were brought before Powhattan. Then as many as could laid hands upon him, dragged him to the stones and thereon laid his head. And being ready with their clubs to beate out his braines, Pocahontas the King’s dearest daughter, when no entreaty could prevaile, got his head in her armes, and laid her owne upon his to save him from death; whereat the Emperor was contented he should live.”

New England Chroniclers. — The early chroniclers of New England were of a different temper. They wrote not for entertainment nor to advertise the country. They told the plain facts without any of the glamour of romance. The most important accounts are William Bradford’s *Of Plymouth Plantation* and John Winthrop’s *History of New England*. Bradford was governor of Plymouth Colony; Winthrop was governor of the neighboring colony of Massachusetts Bay, and later of the United Colonies of Massachusetts. Both histories are straightforward and matter-of-fact accounts of the hardships and heroism of the earliest settlers. Some of the descriptions — The first Encounter with the Indians, for example — are vigorous and spirited.

Samuel Sewall (1652–1730). — One of the most remarkable books of the period is the *Diary* of Samuel Sewall. Sewall was a judge who pronounced sentence of death on some of the Salem witches in 1692, and who afterwards publicly repented of his action. His *Diary* is a confused mass of notes on all manner of subjects, important and unimportant — the weather, the declaration of war between France and England, the death of a pussy-cat, the execution of witches, the treasure of Captain Kidd. The entries are

mostly minute and unimaginative, but sometimes they make a genuine appeal to our human sympathies. The book throws much light upon the life of the time.

John Woolman (1729-1772). — Along with Sewall's *Diary* must be mentioned *The Journal* of John Woolman, an artless account of the life of a sincere and simple-minded New Jersey Quaker. He was a tailor and itinerant missionary, going about preaching mercy and justice and love. He seems to have been lowly born and self-educated, but he writes with the refinement of a gentleman and the simplicity of an artist. Charles Lamb said, "Get the writings of John Woolman by heart, and love the early Quakers."

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790). — The early chroniclers, however, can hardly be said to have produced genuine literature. Not until near the end of the colonial period did America produce writers of history and biography whose books are still widely read. Of these, Benjamin Franklin was by far the most distinguished. He was born and reared in Boston, but lived most of his life in Philadelphia among the Quakers. He began life in poverty; but by strength of character and steady industry, he gradually rose to eminence in his own country and in the end became a celebrity in the social centers of Europe and an ambassador to the courts of kings. The life of this shrewd practical Yankee reads like a romance.

Franklin's Autobiography. — His life may best be read in his own *Autobiography*; a simple, straightforward, often witty account of a "self-made man." Franklin wrote it partly for the purpose of instructing his grandchildren in the secret of worldly success and partly, he tells us, to gratify his own vanity. He explains in detail how he rose from obscurity to fame and insists that the same thing can be done by any one who is willing to take the trouble. Even

his ability to write he gained not by inspiration but by patient painstaking training, making notes on Addison's Essays and afterwards writing them out in his own words for comparison with the original or translating stories into verse and, when the original had been forgotten, translating the verse back into prose. The tone of the book has been criticised as being too worldly-wise. It lacks idealism and spirituality. But it gives very useful advice in the matter of making a living; it is full of genuine human interest; and it has an important historical background. It is the only book of the period before the American Revolution which is still widely read.

Poor Richard's Almanac. — Of the other writings of Franklin — and they were many — *Poor Richard's Almanac* was the most influential. This work brought him his first fame and its continued production maintained a steady popularity for twenty-five years. The wise and often witty sayings scattered through this almanac impressed Franklin's shrewd, practical philosophy not only upon his own generation but upon later generations also. Many of his pithy maxims are still known and quoted by everybody.

"God helps them that help themselves."

"It is hard for an empty sack to stand upright."

"Three may keep a secret, if two of them are dead."

"Honesty is the best policy."

"Experience keeps a dear school, but fools will learn in no other."

"Great talkers are little doers."

"If you would know the value of money, go try to borrow some, for he who goes a-borrowing goes a-sorrowing."

Many of Franklin's sayings have almost become a part of the national consciousness.

(b) THEOLOGICAL WRITINGS

Cotton Mather (1663–1728). — The chief interest of our Puritan fathers was in religion. They were exiles for the sake of religion. God was their lawgiver; the Bible, their statute book. The ministers were their most learned and influential men. The clergy actually dominated the entire life of the community. Much therefore of the intellectual strength of the colonists went into the writing of ecclesiastical works. Such is Cotton Mather's great book *Magnalia Christi Americana; or The Ecclesiastical History of New England from its First Planting in the year 1620 unto the Year of our Lord 1698*. This book contains the lives of governors, magistrates, and divines; an account of Harvard University with the lives of its graduates; the acts of church synods; a record of divine providences; a history of the afflictions and disturbances of the church; and much besides. It was an influential book in its time, and all of the great writers of New England were more or less familiar with it. Longfellow, for instance, drew from it the subject matter for his poem, *The Phantom Ship*. To-day it is a book which everybody knows about, and few, except specialists in history, ever read.

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758). — The most famous of all the theologians was Jonathan Edwards. He made a wonderful reputation for clear and logical thinking. In his book on *The Freedom of the Will*, he maintained that man is not a free agent, that he may not make a free choice between right and wrong, but must do what God has decided beforehand he shall do. There was no more influential book published in colonial times. Even those who did not accept his conclusions found it hard to answer his arguments. As a preacher, also, Edwards was remarkable. God and

Heaven and Hell were as real to him as Northampton, Massachusetts, where he lived. His vivid descriptions of the torments of the damned filled his hearers with terror. His much-quoted sermon on "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" gives the impression that his idea of God was altogether dreadful. This, however, is not quite true. He also looked upon God as the most lovable being in the universe, and delighted in the peace and happiness of the saints in Heaven.

"But the foundation of the Christian's peace is everlasting; it is what no time, no change, can destroy. It will remain when the body dies; it will remain when the mountains depart and the hills shall be removed, and when the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll. The fountain of his comfort shall never be diminished, and the stream shall never be dried. His comfort and joy is like a living spring in the soul, a well of water springing up to everlasting life."

(c) POETRY

The Bay Psalm Book (1640). — The early colonists wrote very little poetry and what they did write is hardly worthy the name. The first book of the kind, *The Bay Psalm Book*, was the attempt of three men to put the Psalms into meter and rime. The following are typical stanzas:

"The rivers on of Babilon,
there where wee did sit down,
Yea, even then wee mourned when
we remembered Sion."

"The earth Jehova's is
and the fullness of it;
The habitable world and they
that thereupon doe sit."

Earliest Poems. — The earliest writer of poetry other than hymns seems to have been Mrs. Anne Bradstreet, whose poems appeared first in London under the title *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung up in America, etc.* (1650). Her poems were highly praised in her day, but are read only from curiosity now. Another popular book in its time was *The Day of Doom* (1662) by Michael Wigglesworth (1631–1705). It is a gloomy and terrible picture of the Last Judgment. The following stanza is characteristic :

“They wring their hands, their caitiff-hands
and gnash their teeth for terror ;
They cry, they roar for anguish sore,
and gnaw their tongues for horror.
But get away without delay,
Christ pities not your cry ;
Depart to Hell, there may you yell,
and roar eternally.”

We laugh at this now, but it caused genuine terror in the New England of the seventeenth century.

The Hartford Wits. — No poetry really worthy of attention was written before the period of the Revolutionary War, and not much of importance then. Timothy Dwight (1752–1817), a grandson of Jonathan Edwards, wrote a patriotic song called *Columbia*, and a long dull epic entitled *The Conquest of Canaan*. He is not remembered so much for these, however, as for the fine hymn beginning :

“I love thy kingdom, Lord.
The house of thy abode,
The church our blest Redeemer saved
With his own precious blood.”

This hymn is still sung in our churches. Also, John Trumbull (1750–1831), a prodigy who passed his entrance examina-

tions for Yale College at seven years of age, wrote *McFingal*, a satire of Revolutionary days. It is after the manner of Butler's *Hudibras*. Joel Barlow (1754-1812) wrote an elaborate epic called *The Columbiad* and a mock-heroic poem on the *Hasty Pudding*. By the irony of fate the elaborate epic is forgotten and the mock-heroics remembered. These three men are known as the "Hartford Wits."

Philip Freneau (1752-1832). — The most original of the early poets was Philip Freneau. The "Hartford Wits" wrote in the conventional manner of the eighteenth century in England, using either the heroic couplet of Pope or the satiric couplet of Butler. Freneau belongs rather to the romantic school of Burns and Coleridge and Wordsworth, whom he really preceded in time. His principal volume appeared in the same year (1786) that Burns published his first volume of poems and twelve years before the publication of *The Lyrical Ballads* of Coleridge and Wordsworth. Besides his patriotic satires against the British and the Royalists, his most memorable poems are *The House of Night*, a grimly imaginative poem akin to the work of Coleridge and Poe, *Eutaw Springs*, a poem in praise of American bravery, *The Indian Burying Ground*, a poem on the pathos of a vanishing race, and *The Wild Honeysuckle*, a very musical little nature lyric. Most people remember Freneau as the author of *The Wild Honeysuckle*. The poem is worth quoting.

Fair flower, that dost so comely grow,
Hid in this silent, dull retreat,
Untouched thy honeyed blossoms blow,
Unseen thy little branches greet;
No roving foot shall crush thee here,
No busy hand provoke a tear.

By nature's self in white arrayed,
She bade thee shun the vulgar eye,
And planted here the guardian shade,
And sent soft waters murmuring by ;
Thus quietly thy summer goes,
Thy days declining to repose.

Smit with those charms, that must decay,
I grieve to see your future doom ;
They died — nor were those flowers more gay,
The flowers that did in Eden bloom ;
Unpitying frosts and autumn's power
Shall leave no vestige of this flower.

From morning sun and evening dews
At first thy little being came ;
If nothing once, you nothing lose,
For when you die you are the same ;
The space between is but an hour,
The frail duration of a flower.

(d) ORATORY AND POLITICAL PROSE

The Orators. — The Revolution produced much oratory, some of which has been preserved and deserves recognition as literature. The principal orators were James Otis and Samuel Adams of Massachusetts, and Patrick Henry of Virginia. The speeches of Otis have not been preserved in the form in which they were pronounced, and only fragments of the speeches of Samuel Adams have come down to us. Both men, however, were very effective orators. John Adams, who heard Otis speak, says of him :

“Otis was a flame of fire ! With a promptitude of classical allusions, a depth of research, a rapid summary of historical events

and dates, a profusion of legal authorities, a prophetic glance of his eyes into futurity, a rapid torrent of impetuous eloquence, he hurried all before him. American independence was then and there born. Every man of an unusually crowded audience appeared to me to go away ready to take up arms against Writs of Assistance. . . . James Otis then and there breathed into this nation the breath of life."

Samuel Adams was much the same kind of a speaker. Patrick Henry's fervid and impassioned oratory is well represented by his famous speech in the Virginia House of Burgesses, which closes with the words, "Give me liberty or give me death." This speech has been committed to memory by nearly every schoolboy.

Political Writers. — Political prose also flourished. Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) wrote the *Declaration of Independence*, the *Summary View of the Rights of British America*, and an instructive *Autobiography*. Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* and *The Crisis* did much to keep up the spirit of the Americans in the darkest times of the Revolution. Alexander Hamilton (1757–1804), James Madison (1751–1836), and John Jay (1745–1829) together published *The Federalist Papers*, a series of brilliant and effective arguments in behalf of the adoption of the constitution.

SUGGESTED READINGS ¹

Franklin: *Autobiography*.

Edwards: *Sermons, Selections*.

Woolman: *Journal*.

Early American Orations, 1760–1824.

¹ These books are all to be found in the Pocket Classics Series, published by The Macmillan Company.

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST CREATIVE PERIOD, 1800-1860

Intellectual Independence. — A great national literature is the outgrowth of a vigorous national life. No vitally characteristic American literature could be expected during the colonial period. Even after America had gained her political independence, she was slow to achieve her intellectual independence and to produce a truly American literature written about distinctly American themes and in a distinctly American manner. We had to develop a national feeling before we could produce a genuinely national literature. Emerson's address on *The American Scholar* (1837) is often called our intellectual declaration of independence.

(a) ROMANCE

Charles Brockden Brown (1771-1810). — The beginnings of a genuinely imaginative literature, however, may be seen as early as the work of Charles Brockden Brown. In some respects, he was dependent on English models. He wrote romances after the fashion of Mrs. Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*, full of horror and mystery and psychological analysis. But he laid the scenes of his stories in his own country and made use of the romantic material of colonial life and Indian adventure. Furthermore, his treatment of horror and mystery and adventure points directly to Poe and Hawthorne and Cooper. His most important romances are

Wieland, *Arthur Mervyn*, and *Edgar Huntley*. The plot of *Wieland* centers about a man who listens to what he thinks are supernatural voices until he is persuaded to murder his wife and children. The book contains much psychological analysis. The most noteworthy part of *Arthur Mervyn* is the famous description of a yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia. It is done in the manner of Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year*. *Edgar Huntley*, which is generally considered the best, recounts a series of adventures in the wild forests of Pennsylvania. It introduces the Indian, and pictures with rare skill the scenery and life of the woods.

Washington Irving (1783–1859). — The work of Charles Brockden Brown, however, cannot compare in excellence with the work of Washington Irving. Irving was a far greater artist and had a wider experience of men and countries. He was brought up in New York City, but was not exclusively a city boy. At that time the town had less than thirty thousand inhabitants, the country was easily accessible, and the boy often took long rambles along the Hudson, sometimes as far into the country as Sleepy Hollow. He often declared his fondness for rural life. Travel also widened his interests and his knowledge. He spent two years of his early manhood in Europe and later resided for seventeen years in Spain and England. To the free wholesome life of the new world he added the polish of European culture.

Irving's Works. — In many respects he was a disciple of Addison. His first work, *Salmagundi*, was a periodical after the manner of *The Spectator*, its avowed purpose being "to instruct the young, reform the old, correct the town, and castigate the age." *The Sketch Book* also has much in common with *The Spectator*. Irving, however, was not a

slavish imitator. Unlike Addison, he was romantic in temperament, and was reared in a new civilization. He loved medieval manners and customs, medieval mystery and superstition. Indeed, he threw about everything the charm of romance. *Knickerbocker's History of New York*, a genuinely American book, gives us the romance of the early Dutch settlements. *Rip Van Winkle* and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* express the romance of the country along the Hudson River. Other parts of *The Sketch Book* and *Bracebridge Hall* present the romance of old English manners and customs. *The Life and Voyages of Columbus* (1828), *The Conquest of Grenada* (1829), and *The Alhambra* (1832) are pervaded by the romance of medieval Spain and the Saracens. *A Tour on the Prairies* expresses the romance of the great west. Later works are *The Life of Oliver Goldsmith* (1849), *Mahomet and his Successors* (1849), and *The Life of Washington* (1855-1859). Irving has been called the "Father of American Letters." He was closely bound to the "storied past" of the old world, but some of his themes were distinctively American, and an American atmosphere is about them all. "He was the first to reveal America as a land of legend and romance." Thackeray calls him "the first ambassador whom the New World of letters sent to the Old."

James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851). — James Fenimore Cooper is more distinctly American than Irving. He portrays preëminently the romance of the frontier, of life in the open, of the struggle of civilization with the wilderness in clearing forests and establishing settlements, of the adventures of traders and trappers with wild beasts and Indians. Cooper's characters, especially his "females," as he calls them, are sometimes uninteresting, his style is often crude, his moralizing is quite unrelieved by any sense of humor.



Cooper Monument, Cooperstown.

But he depicts in a stirring manner the romance of daring deeds, — his heroes are large-hearted and commanding, his imagination is sane and wholesome. His books interpret the vigor and sincerity of early America. As a literary artist Cooper was inferior to Scott and Stevenson, but in the vivid quality of his imagination his kinship with them is evident. His stories are popular in Europe as well as in America.

Cooper's Stories. — Cooper wrote thirty-two stories in all, historical romances, romances of the sea, and romances of the frontier. *The Spy* is a story of the Revolution. The hero, Harvey Birch, is one of Washington's confidential agents who risks his life as a spy without honor or reward, Nay, he is branded as a traitor. His loyalty is suspected even by his own countrymen. It is the price of efficiency, and he pays the price heroically. The principal stories of the sea are *The Pilot*, *The Two Admirals*, and *Wing and Wing*. Of all Cooper's stories, however, the most popular are the romances of the frontier, especially the Leather Stocking Tales. This series of five romances centers about the experience of Natty Bumpo, a woodsman who is known under the various names of Leather Stocking, Hawkeye, Deerslayer, Pathfinder, and La Longue Carabine. The series should be read in the following order, *The Deerslayer*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Pathfinder*, *The Pioneers*, *The Prairie*.

The Tales of Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849). — The romance of mystery and terror is represented by the tales of Edgar Allan Poe, a strange, abnormal genius. Many of these tales, such as *The Gold Bug*, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *The Mystery of Marie Rogêt*, and *The Purloined Letter*, are detective stories not unlike Dr. Conan Doyle's *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. *MS. Found in a Bottle* and

A Descent into a Maelstrom are tales of adventure with the added interest of semi-scientific speculation. *The Black Cat* is a tale of pure terror. Fantastic and terrible also are the supernatural tales, *Ligeia* and *The Fall of the House of Usher*, the latter of which is usually considered Poe's best story. These tales are all comparatively short. Indeed, Poe has often been called "the father of the short story."

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864). — The most delicate and charming of all our early romancers was Nathaniel Hawthorne. His ancestors were Puritans, and their moral sensitiveness and feeling for the supernatural were strong in his blood. One of his ancestors had taken part in the Salem witchcraft trials and had been the object of a witch's curse. Hawthorne's imagination played about this circumstance and about the entire New England past. Moreover, his retiring life made it easy for him to be a dreamer and led him naturally to a study of the problems of the inner life. There is an atmosphere of mystery about his characters, and the events are invested with a symbolic significance. The moral purpose is always strong. Everything, however, is managed with such a delicate imaginative touch that the stories seem neither fantastic nor morbid. Just "a slight, delicate and evanescent flavor of the marvelous" is thrown over the events "to mellow the lights and deepen and enrich the shadows of the picture."

His Short Stories. — Many of Hawthorne's romances are short stories written with delicate imagination and in a graceful style. The best are found in *Twice-Told Tales*, *The Snow Image and Other Twice-Told Tales*, and *Mosses from an Old Manse*. Some of these are symbolic or allegorical, such as *The Great Stone Face*, *The Ambitious Guest*, *The Great Carbuncle*. Others are legendary and traditional,

such as *The Gentle Boy*, *The Gray Champion*, and *The Maypole of Merry Mount*. Hawthorne gives us, however, the romance and not the history of early New England, just as Irving gives us the romance of the early Dutch settlements in New York or as Cooper gives us the romance of the frontier. *The Wonder Book* and *Tanglewood Tales* are modern versions of Greek and Roman myths.

The Long Romances. — Hawthorne's most important contributions to literature are four long romances. *The Scarlet Letter* is the story of two sinful hearts, one openly persecuted, the other inwardly tormented by conscience. For analysis of the human heart and for dramatic intensity, it is the most powerful of them all. *The House of the Seven Gables* is not so intense, but is pleasanter reading. The story seems to have been suggested by the fact that one of Hawthorne's ancestors, who took part in the witch trials, was put under the curse of one of the unfortunate victims. Hawthorne uses the circumstance to illustrate the theme of how "the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children." *The Blithedale Romance* was suggested by Hawthorne's experience in the socialistic community at Brook Farm. It is less symbolic than the others. The scene of *The Marble Faun* is laid in Italy. It is a story of impulsive wrongdoing and the consequent suffering, the birth of a soul through the experiences of sin. The charm of all the stories lies largely in the delicacy with which the imagination plays about the mysteries of life.

Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896). — In one conspicuous case romance was used with a definite moral purpose. Mrs. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is so full of moral conviction and of the spirit of the propagandist that it is perhaps more a novel of purpose than a romance. It was consciously directed against the institution of slavery and had an in-

calculable influence in crystallizing the antislavery sentiment. The book was enormously popular and the dramatized version has continued to attract large audiences almost to our own day. As a type of art, the book marks the transition from the romance to the realistic novel.

(b) POETRY

Early Minor Poetry. — Poetry developed much more slowly in America than prose romance. Before the publication of Bryant's *Thanatopsis* (1817) little if any important verse had been published; and for a number of years Bryant stood alone as our one great poet. The other poets of the first third of the nineteenth century are remembered mostly for single poems: Joseph Rodman Drake (1795–1820) for *The American Flag*, Fitz-Green Halleck (1790–1867) for *Marco Bozzaris*, Francis Scott Key (1779–1843) for *The Star-Spangled Banner*, John Howard Payne (1791–1852) for *Home, Sweet Home*, and Samuel Woodworth (1785–1842) for *The Old Oaken Bucket*.

William Cullen Bryant (1794–1878). — Our first great American poet was William Cullen Bryant, the son of a country physician in western Massachusetts. His formal education was meager. He learned Latin from his uncle and Greek and mathematics from a neighboring minister, who was paid one dollar a week for the boy's board and lodging and instruction. Later, Bryant spent seven months at Williams College. This completed his formal education. His training for poetry came mostly from nature and his father's library. The law was his first choice as a career, but he soon drifted into journalism and for nearly fifty years was editor of the *New York Evening Post*. He exerted a strong influence on literature throughout his long career.

Poetry of Nature and Reflection. — As a poet he is remarkable not so much for the quantity and range of his work as for its dignity and purity. He wrote comparatively little and most of it is nature poetry, reflective in tone. But its dignified manner is well sustained and the style always pure and finished. Among his best nature lyrics are *June*, *The Planting of the Apple Tree*, *The Death of the Flowers*, and *The Fringed Gentian*. The most widely known of the purely meditative poems are *Thanatopsis* and *To a Waterfowl*. *Thanatopsis* is a reflective poem on death, composed when the poet was only seventeen years old. Yet it is not inferior to his later work. *To a Waterfowl* has autobiographical interest, for it was the outgrowth of a particular personal experience. As Bryant was walking along the country road puzzling over the problem of his future and trying to determine on a place to begin the practice of law, he saw a solitary waterfowl take its flight across the evening sky. The picture seemed to him a symbol of himself and his own rather melancholy situation, though his tranquil faith drew from it a final consolation.

“He who from zone to zone
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In a long way that I must tread alone
Will lead my steps aright.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882), though usually thought of as a philosopher and essayist, a leader in the transcendental movement (see p. 180), was also one of our early poets and needs at least passing mention here. His poetry, however, has never been popular and some of it is difficult to understand. Many of the poems, such as *The Sphinx*, *The Problem*, *Merlin*, *Brahma*, give expression to his half-mystical philosophy. Others, such as *The Humble-*

Bee, *The Snow Storm*, *Days*, and *Wood-Notes*, show an intimate love of nature. The most passionate of all his poems is, perhaps, *Threnody*, a lament for Emerson's boy Waldo, who died at the age of five.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) has been the most popular of all our American poets. His simple melodious verses sang themselves into the hearts of the people, touching with beauty their common joys and common sorrows. He was not a poet of intense passion or large vision. Nor was he strikingly original. He had a wide human sympathy, a sure sense of beauty, and a steady tranquillity of spirit. He was a scholar and drew most of his inspiration from books; but he was never scholastic or technical, because all his learning was vitalized. He did much to extend the knowledge of modern languages and literatures both by his teaching at Harvard College and by his translations and adaptations of particular works.

Short Poems. — His first volume of poems, *Voices of the Night*, appeared in 1839. It contained such popular favorites as *Hymn to the Night*, *A Psalm of Life*, *The Light of Stars*, *The Reaper and the Flowers*, *Footsteps of Angels*, *Flowers*, *Midnight Mass for the Dying Year*. Later came the ballads, *The Skeleton in Armor* and *The Wreck of the Hesperus*; and later still some fine lyrics including *The Belfry of Bruges* and *The Norman Baron*. To 1850 belong *Resignation* and *The Building of the Ship*.

Longer Poems. — The most important longer poems are *Evangeline* (1847), *Hiawatha* (1855), and *The Courtship of Miles Standish* (1858). *Evangeline* is a sweet pathetic idyl of the wanderings of the Acadians. It is also a protest against a great wrong done by the English to this innocent peasant people. *Hiawatha*, a romance of Indian life, is not a true account of facts, but is an admirable piece of romantic

idealization. *The Courtship of Miles Standish* is a Puritan romance, nearly if not quite as popular though not so poetic as the other two. The meter of *Evangeline* and *The Courtship of Miles Standish* is dactylic hexameter, the meter of Virgil's *Æneid*. *Hiawatha* is written in the meter of the Finnish epic, *Kalavala*, a four-accent verse unrimed, with much repetition of phrase, which gives the poem an archaic tone very well suited to the theme. *The Tales of a Wayside Inn* consists mostly of stories from foreign sources. Longfellow knew how to treat simple themes in simple and beautiful language.

James Russell Lowell (1819–1891) succeeded Longfellow as Professor of Modern Languages at Harvard. Longfellow, through his teaching of the languages and by his poetic translations and adaptations, had made the literature of continental Europe widely known in America. Lowell became the discriminating critic of this new knowledge. Much of his writing was therefore in prose (see p. 198), but he was a great poet, also. His lyrics and idyls are quite as beautiful as Longfellow's. Such are *To a Dandelion*, *Indian Summer Reverie*, *The First Snowfall*, *The Vision of Sir Launfal*. Among his poems of patriotism, *The Present Crisis* and *The Harvard Commemoration Ode* are especially vigorous and lofty. He differs most from Longfellow in his satirical poems. His literary satire, *The Fable for Critics*, contains some very witty and penetrating criticism of the American writers of his time. His political satire, *The Biglow Papers*, written partly in prose and partly in verse, voices Lowell's indignation over the Mexican War. The Yankee dialect adds much to the humor and makes the satire racy. In the prefatory matter, Lowell inserted the famous Yankee idyl, *The Courtin'*, which has been called "one of the freshest bits of pastoral in the language."

John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892) has been called “the laureate of freedom.” Much of his early poetry is antislavery poetry. Indeed, the antislavery cause was dearer to him than poetry itself, for, like Milton, he deserted the Muse at times to give his energy to political journalism. Among his best poems are *Liberty*, *Toussaint L'Ouverture*, *The Slave Ship*, *Expostulation*, *The Hunters of Men*, *Farewell of a Virginia Slave Mother*, *Ichabod*, *Laus Deo*. *Ichabod* is a scathing rebuke of Webster because of his famous *Seventh of March Speech*, in which Webster spoke in favor of compromise on the slavery question. Whittier afterwards confessed that he had mistaken the character and motives of Webster and tried to do him tardy justice in *The Lost Occasion*. This poem should be read in connection with *Ichabod*. *Laus Deo* is a magnificent song of exultation over the constitutional amendment prohibiting slavery.

Ballads and Lyrics. — The antislavery poetry, however, does not represent Whittier at his best as a literary artist. The ballads and lyrics are distinctly superior. *The Funeral Tree of the Sokokis*, *The Garrison of Cape Ann*, *Cassandra Southwick*, *Mary Garvin*, *The Witch's Daughter*, *The Prophecy of Samuel Sewall*, *Abraham Davenport*, *Mabel Martin*, *Skipper Ireson's Ride*, and many more have strong ballad characteristics. They are simple, rapid, vivid, dramatic. They are based upon tradition. *Barbara Frietchie* is our best known Civil War ballad. The lyrics of home, nature, and religion are often very exquisite. Such are *The Barefoot Boy*, *In School Days*, *Telling the Bees*, *The Songs of Labor*, *The Merrimac*, *Among the Hills*, *Hampton Beach*, and especially *The Eternal Goodness*.

Snow Bound. — The most popular and perhaps the most perfect of Whittier's poems is *Snow Bound: A Winter Idyl*. John Burroughs calls it “the most faithful picture

of our Northern winter that has yet been put into poetry." It also gives the inner life of the New England home, especially the home of Whittier's boyhood. Its simple rustic pictures and its deep religious faith make it a classic like Burns's *The Cotter's Saturday Night* and Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*. Carpenter says of it: "He, this old man who has been an East Haverhill boy, describes *his* homestead, *his* brook, *his* family circle, *his* schoolmaster, apparently intent on naught but the complete accuracy of his narrative, and lo! such is his art that he has drawn the one perfect, imperishable picture of that bright old winter life in that strange clime. Diaries, journals, histories, biographies, autobiographies, with the same end in view, are not all together so typical as this unique poem of less than a thousand lines."

Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894) was not primarily a poet but he wrote many humorous pieces in verse and a few very exquisite lyrics. *The One Hoss Shay*, *How the Old Horse Won the Bet*, and *The Boys* are the best known of the humorous pieces. *Old Ironsides* is a very spirited naval lyric. *The Chambered Nautilus* is a beautiful finished lyric of meditation. *The Last Leaf*, a rich blending of smiles and tears, was a favorite with Abraham Lincoln.

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849). — The most musical of all the American poets was Edgar Allan Poe, whose prose romances we have already considered (see p. 167). His poems are melancholy expressions of love and loss and despair. They have sometimes been called meaningless. The characters are often shadowy, and the thought vague and mysterious. The melody, however, is always exquisitely rich and the metrical form perfectly finished. The best known are *The Sleeper*, *To Helen*, *Ulalume*, *The Raven*, *Lenore*, *Annabel Lee*, *The Bells*, and *The Haunted Palace*. His theory was that poetry has to do with beauty alone, regard-

less of life and truth and nature. He defined poetry as "the rhythmic creation of the beautiful." Furthermore, he followed his theory consistently. Swinburne, to whom Poe's work would naturally appeal, speaks of his poetry as "subtle and simple and somber and sweet."

(c) ORATORY

In the period between the formation of the government and the Civil War, oratory flourished greatly. The prevailing interest of the people was in politics and government. The interpretation of the powers of the constitution, which gradually increased the authority and prestige of the national government, stimulated the intellectual powers of public men. The burning question of slavery, about which all discussion centered, aroused the deepest emotions and passions. Public opinion was sharply divided, and the issue was fought out on both sides with great bitterness. Congress became the scene of fierce and prolonged debate. The times demanded the intellect and the personality of great orators.

Daniel Webster (1782-1852). — The giant among the early parliamentary orators was Daniel Webster of Massachusetts. He was the great champion of the idea of nationality. He was opposed to the doctrine of "states rights," defended the powers of the central government, and argued for a broad and liberal interpretation of the powers of the constitution. When the question came to its sharpest issue in Congress in 1830, and Calhoun and Hayne of South Carolina were pressing most vigorously the theory of state sovereignty and the doctrine of nullification, Webster delivered in the Senate the most effective of all his speeches, the famous *Reply to Hayne*, which closes with the memorable words, "Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable." This speech established the argument for nationality.

Forensic and Occasional Orations. — Webster was also a great forensic and commemorative orator. His most famous forensic addresses are his arguments in behalf of Dartmouth College, before the United States Supreme Court in 1818, and his speech in the White murder trial at Salem, Massachusetts, in 1829. The former shows his thorough knowledge of legal principles and contains some strong emotional passages, notably his tribute to Dartmouth College, his alma mater. The latter shows his marvelous persuasive power over a jury. His description of the White murder, based on the facts in evidence, is a striking example of graphic oratory. His greatest addresses for special occasions are the *Plymouth Oration* (1820), delivered at the two hundredth anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims, the first *Bunker Hill Oration* (1825), given at the laying of the corner-stone of the Bunker Hill monument, and *Adams and Jefferson* (1826), a eulogy pronounced shortly after the death of these great statesmen, both of whom died on the same day, July 4, 1826.

Style. — Webster's speeches belong to the majestic type of oratory. The sentences are often long and elaborately constructed. Periodic climaxes are carefully developed. There is a striving after stately rhythm and rich and melodious cadences. In the present age of conversational oratory, Webster's style often seems strained and artificial. Yet his addresses are undeniably eloquent, models, indeed, of diction, beautiful in imagery, rich in emotional power. Webster had both the power of wide generalization and the mastery of innumerable details, a combination which is rare indeed. Part, at least, of his work has won a secure place in American literature.

Other Congressional Orators. — Webster's most distinguished contemporaries in Congress were Henry Clay

(1777-1852) of Kentucky and John C. Calhoun (1782-1850) of South Carolina. Calhoun was the champion of state sovereignty and the author of the doctrine of nullification. He was a clear and logical thinker, with a direct and simple style, but he lacked the emotional and persuasive qualities of Webster and Clay. Clay was a chief advocate of the Missouri Compromise of 1820 and the author of the compromise measures of 1850. He has been called "the great pacificator." He had great rhetorical powers and a very magnetic personality. He could sway crowds by his eloquence quite as effectively as Webster, but he did not have equal depth and power of thought. Consequently his speeches have not taken so high a rank as literature. The speeches of Clay and Calhoun on the Compromise Measures of 1850 are characteristic of the two men.

The Academic Orators. — Among the academic orators, Rufus Choate (1799-1859) and Edward Everett (1794-1865) are easily preëminent. Choate was a lawyer of marked ability and with a singular power over juries. He was also a favorite occasional orator. He was a man of scholarship and refinement and breadth of information. His vocabulary was discriminating and picturesque, his sentences elaborately periodic, sometimes reaching the length of four or five hundred words. His best known address is his eulogy on Daniel Webster. Everett was Professor of Greek at Harvard University, Governor of Massachusetts, Minister to Great Britain, President of Harvard, Secretary of State, and United States senator. He was the most polished orator of his time, although not so fervid and forceful as Choate. His style is elaborate and highly figurative. The best known of his addresses is the *Eulogy on Washington*. It was delivered one hundred and fifty times in the interests of the Mount Vernon Association.

The Antislavery Orators. — Charles Sumner (1811–1874) and Wendell Phillips (1811–1884) were the great champions of the abolition movement. Sumner did most of his work in Congress, where he was the leader of the antislavery cause for years. His style was sometimes vehemently passionate. *The Crime against Kansas* is full of bitter vituperation. *The True Grandeur of Nations* represents his more stately academic style, rich in scholarly allusions. Wendell Phillips was a popular agitator. He cultivated a more conversational type of oratory, varied in its rhetorical effect. He was a master of sarcasm and invective. Like all agitators, however, he was much given to exaggeration, so that his speeches are not always effective when read in cold type. His speech on *Toussaint L'Ouverture* is characteristic.

Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865). — The modern style of conversational oratory is further represented by the addresses of Abraham Lincoln. They lack the studied periods and elaborate climaxes of the academic school. Lincoln did not have the refinement of polite learning. He was a simple man of the people, self-taught yet well taught. His speaking was simple, sincere, direct, forceful. In the Lincoln-Douglas debates, the speeches of Lincoln show less grace and finish than those of Douglas, but they have stronger moral earnestness and make a more direct appeal. His later speeches have literary grace and charm without being in the least artificial.

His Addresses. — His best known addresses are the two *Inaugurals* and *The Gettysburg Address*. All these are comparatively short. The *Inaugurals* are altogether worthy of the occasion, — dignified, conciliatory, firm. A great crisis is treated with the frank simplicity of genius. It was not a time for the graces of rhetoric. "The costly ornaments and studied contrivances of speech shock and disgust men,

when their own lives, and the fate of their wives, their children, and their country hang on the decision of the hour." *The Gettysburg Address* is a marvel for concentration of thought and simplicity of expression. Edward Everett, who gave a long address on the same occasion, said in a letter to Lincoln next day, "I should be glad if I could flatter myself that I came as near to the central idea of the occasion in two hours as you did in two minutes."

Other Orators of this period are Robert Young Hayne (1791-1839), William Henry Seward (1801-1872), and Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887). Hayne's speech on *The Sales of the Public Lands* and Seward's on *The Irrepressible Conflict* are especially noteworthy.

(d) MISCELLANEOUS PROSE

Transcendentalism. — The intellectual independence of America was largely brought about by the transcendental movement. The movement began in Europe, the outcome of the democratic movement in politics, the romantic movement in literature, and the idealistic movement in philosophy; the theories of the French Revolution, the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge, the thinking of Coleridge and Carlyle. It was a protest against conventional and formal thinking. It emphasized the intuitions; it exalted spiritual truth. The individual soul was of supreme importance. Nature was the symbol or garment of a spiritual force behind and within. In America the movement took the form of a reaction against the rigid dogmatism and moral severity of the Puritans and the dry rationalism of Unitarian thought. It meant spiritual joy and intellectual freedom, the spontaneous development of the individual life. The leading spirits were Theodore Parker (1810-1860),



Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), Amos Bronson Alcott (1799-1888), George Ripley (1802-1880), Margaret Fuller (1810-1850), and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862). They were idealists and reformers. They founded a Transcendental Club and published a magazine, *The Dial*, which became the organ of the movement. As an experiment of practical reform, some of them under the leadership of George Ripley organized the socialistic community of Brook Farm at West Roxbury, Massachusetts. *The Dial* was short-lived and the Brook Farm experiment unsuccessful, but the movement as a whole was of lasting influence.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) was the central figure of the group. His influence on American thought and letters was very great. His Phi Beta Kappa address on *The American Scholar*, delivered at Harvard College in 1837, has been called "our intellectual declaration of independence." He urged the new scholar to go for inspiration to nature and life rather than to books, to be free, brave, self-trustful, "to read God directly," to believe in his own intuitions of truth, planting himself "indomitably on his instincts," revering his own individuality as "inspired by the Divine Soul, which also inspires all men." It was a call to a new and original intellectual life. And Emerson led the way. Already he had vowed, "Henceforth I design not to utter any speech, poem, or book that is not entirely and peculiarly my work." Just a year before (1836) he had published his little book *Nature*, a declaration of idealistic faith. His first volume of *Essays* appeared in 1841, containing the essays on *History*, *Self-Reliance*, *Compensation*, *Heroism*, *The Over-Soul*. The second series, containing *Character*, *Manners*, *Politics*, etc., followed in 1844. Then came *Poems* (1847), *Representative Men* (1850), *English Traits* (1856), *The Conduct of Life* (1860), *Society and Solitude*

(1870). Meanwhile he was spreading his ideas by means of lectures, inaugurating the Lyceum lecture system, which later became universally popular and influential through such eminent orators as Everett, Phillips, and Curtis.

His Style. — His lectures and essays are not easy to read because they are not so much the result of coherent thinking as the disconnected intuitions of a seer. It has been said that "his essays can be read backward as well as forward." There is nothing inevitable in the sequence of the sentences and paragraphs. Individual sentences, however, are marvels of thought and construction, short, finished, epigrammatical, unforgettable. Emerson is the most quotable writer in American literature, not excepting Franklin.

"Books are for the scholar's idle times."

"All men are at last of a size."

"The eyes of man are set in his forehead, not in his hindhead."

"Man hopes: genius creates."

"Every man is a divinity in disguise, a god playing the fool."

"Let a man know his worth and keep things under his feet."

"Beware when God lets loose a thinker on this planet. Then all things are at risk."

"Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm."

Emerson furnished his age with an intellectual and moral tonic.

Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862). — The only other member of the transcendental group who has won an enduring place in literature was Henry David Thoreau. He hardly belonged to the inner circle of transcendentalists; but he was a close friend of Emerson, a man, indeed, after Emerson's own heart, living sturdily the doctrine of individualism, going his self-appointed way with serene independence. His nature was distinctly unsocial. He built a rude hut in the woods near Walden Pond and lived there

alone for two years. The woods meant to him freedom. Life there gave him the opportunity to observe and enjoy nature, and reflect upon the ways of men. "I went to the woods," he says, "because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived." He did not ignore the problems of his time, but his view of society was pessimistic and, therefore, not distinctly helpful. His real interest was in nature. "Blessed are they," he said, "who never read men's affairs, for they shall see nature, and, through her, God." His fame rests upon his descriptions of nature and his accounts of life in the open air. He looked at nature with the eyes of the poet rather than of the scientist, delighting in her variety and mystery. He was a poet-naturalist. *Walden*, a record of his first year at Walden Pond, is his principal work, the only one published in his lifetime except *A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers*. He left a mass of manuscript, however, in the form of a journal; and five books were made from it and published shortly after his death, *Excursions*, *The Maine Woods*, *Cape Cod*, *Letters*, and *A Yankee in Canada*. Others were added later. The fame of Thoreau has been growing steadily.

Historians. — Among the miscellaneous prose writers of this period four historians may fairly be said to have found a place in literature. Histories are not usually classed as literature, but occasionally an historian arises who has not only a mastery of facts but also the power of arranging and interpreting those facts with definite artistic purpose. Such were George Bancroft, W. H. Prescott, J. L. Motley, and Francis Parkman.

George Bancroft (1800–1891) was the least literary of the four; his *History of the United States* is not easy reading.

However, the exhaustive method and the accuracy of detail have given it a well-earned preëminence. There are ten volumes in all, representing an enormous amount of research. Indeed, the greater part of fifty years was spent in the preparation, though only the Colonial and Revolutionary periods are treated. The work is not accepted as final authority because of its over-patriotic and partisan bias. It lacks also the charm of literary style.

William Hickling Prescott (1796–1859) was less exhaustive in research than Bancroft, for he was so nearly blind that he was unable to read for himself; but he was a far greater literary artist. Taking for his subject the Spanish conquest in America, a picturesque and adventurous theme, he brooded over the facts which his secretaries gathered for him until the whole series of events appeared before his mind as in one brilliant romantic pageant. His great works are *Ferdinand and Isabella* (1837), *The Conquest of Mexico* (1843), and *The Conquest of Peru* (1847). The public read them like romances, which indeed they are. "He filled his wide canvas with splendid masses of figures, scenes of court and camp and tropical forest, battlefields and strange barbaric pomp." There was at the same time both unity of design and beauty of detail.

John Lothrop Motley (1814–1877) was both a scholar and a literary artist. He selected as his field of study one of the most dramatic periods of European history, the period from the abdication of Charles V of Spain (1555) to the peace of Westphalia (1648). Holland was the center of the drama. The unifying theme was to be "The Eighty Years' War for Liberty." The purpose was to trace the heroic struggle of Holland against the tyranny of Spain, tell the story of the United Netherlands, and reduce to something like order the chaos of events known as the Thirty Years' War. The first

installment was *The Rise of the Dutch Republic*, in three volumes, published in 1856. This brilliant historical record is as accurate as patient scholarship could make it and as interesting as a romance. Between 1860 and 1868 appeared *The History of the United Netherlands* in four volumes, a subject of vast scope, dealing with the world-wide conflicts of the late sixteenth century, a great panorama of European history in the time of Queen Elizabeth. The general plan was to have been concluded by a history of the Thirty Years' War, but Motley did not live to complete the work.

His Method. — Motley was not a dispassionate historian, but a sympathetic and ardent defender of the Dutch. William of Orange was the hero of the story. The villain was Philip II of Spain. Motley was not unfaithful to the facts, but he used the facts to plead the cause of freedom of thought and speech and worship. He was not a modern scientific historian, but rather a faithful and graphic "describer of mighty heroic deeds." One "finishes the reading with a more vivid realization of the fearful part which war has played in the sad but stirring drama of human history."

Francis Parkman (1823-1893) was the historian of the American Wilderness. His first book, *The California and Oregon Trail* (1849), is an account of a journey through the then unknown Northwest. It recreates for us the pioneer life of the west. We are fortunate, indeed, in having so accurate and so vivid an account of the heroic conquest of the wilderness. Parkman's great historical theme, however, was the struggle of England and France for the control of the New World, the struggle which ended with the capture of Quebec (1759). This theme engaged the attention of Parkman for over forty years. The result was a series of eight volumes, the most important of which are *La Salle; or The Discovery of the Great West* (1869), an absorbing story

of exploration and adventure, and *Montcalm and Wolfe* (1884), a well-planned and artistically written account of the final struggle for the control of the continent, ending with the victory of the English at Quebec. Parkman's work shows thorough scholarship. He was indefatigable in the search of historical sources and conscientiously accurate in the use of facts. He visited all the scenes described in his books. Moreover, he had the eye of an artist and the genius of the story-teller, so that he was able to make truth seem more romantic than fiction without losing anything of the reality of truth.

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING¹

- Bryant: *Thanatopsis, Sella, and other Poems.*
 Cooper: *The Last of the Mohicans, The Spy.*
 Edwards: *Sermons.*
 Emerson: *Essays, Representative Man.*
 Franklin: *Autobiography.*
 Hawthorne: *The House of the Seven Gables, Mosses from an Old Manse.*
 Holmes: *Poems, The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.*
 Irving: *Alhambra, Sketch Book.*
 Lincoln: *Addresses.*
 Longfellow: *The Courtship of Miles Standish, Evangeline, The Song of Hiawatha.*
 Lowell: *The Vision of Sir Launfal.*
 Parkman: *The Oregon Trail.*
 Poe: *Poems, Prose Tales.*
 Washington: *Farewell Address.*
 Webster: *Bunker Hill Orations.*
 Woolman: *Journal.*

¹ All these readings may be found in the Pocket Series of English Classics published by The Macmillan Company.

CHAPTER X

THE SECOND CREATIVE PERIOD

The Period. — There is no distinct break between the period before and the period after the Civil War. This is particularly true of poetry, for the same great poets, Longfellow and Lowell and Whittier, continued to sing as before. Still the intellectual and humanitarian interests which had centered in the interpretation of the constitution and the abolition of slavery were turned into new channels. New writers gradually came into prominence and new phrases of literary interest were developed. The poetic impulse was no longer confined to New England and the Middle Atlantic States. Oratory ceased to be academic and became more conversational and direct. In fiction, the emphasis shifted from the idealistic romance of Hawthorne and Poe to the realistic novel of Howells and Henry James. Above all, a new art form, the short-story, fostered by the monthly magazines, threatened to monopolize the popular literary interests.

(a) POETRY

Walt Whitman (1819-1892). — While Longfellow and Lowell and Whittier were at the height of their activity, a new group of poets was coming into prominence in New York. Of these, Walt Whitman was the most distinguished. He was born in the same year as Lowell, but did not become known as a poet until after the Civil War. His *Leaves of Grass*,

first published in 1855, did not reach its complete form for ten or fifteen years. In its final form, this is Whitman's most characteristic work. Its purpose, said the author, "is to present a complete picture of man in this age." It certainly treats a vast variety of subjects: indeed the chaos of democracy is in it. Its most striking characteristic is the style, very free and unconventional verse hardly to be distinguished in places from highly-wrought prose. This book, however, has only a few devoted admirers. Most people enjoy more the *Drum Taps*, and everybody appreciates *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed* and *O Captain! my Captain!*

Taylor and Stoddard. — James Bayard Taylor (1825–1878) and Richard Henry Stoddard (1825–1903) should be thought of together, for they were lifelong friends and each was the poetic complement of the other. Each wrote one long narrative poem: Taylor, *Lars, A Pastoral of Norway*; Stoddard, *The King's Bell*. Both, however, were primarily lyric poets. Taylor was a great traveler and many of his lyrics interpret the spirit of foreign lands. His best volume is perhaps *Poems of the Orient*. Stoddard's lyrics are more purely emotional and often more deeply imaginative. Taylor himself characterizes them both in the following lines addressed to Stoddard:

"You strain your ears to catch the harmonies
That in some finer regions have their birth;
I turn, despairing, from pursuit of these,
And seek to learn the native tongue of Earth.
In Fancy's tropic clime your castle stands,
A shining miracle of rarest art;
I pitch my tent upon the naked sands,
And the tall palm, that plumes the orient lands,
Can with its beauty satisfy my heart."

Edmund Clarence Stedman (1833–1908) was for many years a central figure in the New York literary circle. Like Taylor and Stoddard, he was a lyric poet. His knowledge of literature was broad; his taste, fastidious. His verse is unusually graceful and polished. He wrote ballads and lyrics, idyls of New England life not unlike those of Lowell and Whittier, and especially poems of city life. He has been called “the laureate of New York City.” *Peter Stuyvesant’s New Year’s Call*, *Fruit Ilium*, and *Pan in Wall Street* illustrate his lyrics of the town. *The Undiscovered Country* and *The Discoverer* represent his more serious poems. *Hawthorne*, his Harvard Phi Beta Kappa poem, is thought by some to be his loftiest and best sustained production.

Thomas Bailey Aldrich (1836–1907) also belongs to this group of lyric poets, although the latter part of his life was spent in Boston rather than in New York City. His fame began with the publication of *The Ballad of Babie Bell* in 1856, and from that time on his literary advance was rapid and sure. Aldrich is not one of our major poets, but his verse is highly finished and often exquisitely beautiful. His lyrics of sentiment and fancy and his clever “society verse” are the best known. *Cloth of Gold* (1874) and *Flower and Thorn* (1876) contain much of his best poetry.

Poets of the South. — The South at this period is represented in poetry by Paul H. Hayne (1830–1886), Henry Timrod (1829–1867), and Sidney Lanier (1842–1881). At the outbreak of the Civil War, Hayne and Timrod were just coming into public notice. Hayne’s first volume appeared in 1855; Timrod’s, in 1860. The war, however, in which both of them served, sadly interfered with poetic activity, and the suffering and poverty incident to the great struggle undermined the health and shortened the career of each. Lanier was more fortunate in the struggle for fame. He is

considered the foremost Southern poet since Poe. He, too, fought in the war and afterward had a long struggle with poverty and disease, but he succeeded in turning his tragedy into triumph. A volume of his poetry was published in 1876. The complete edition appeared in 1884. He believed in the high mission of art and protested against the commercialism and materialism of his time. His poetry, though often didactic, is highly imaginative, melodious, refined, the poetry of beauty and music. Examples of his best work are *Corn*, *The Ballad of the Trees and the Master*, *The Marshes of Glynn*, *The Song of the Chattahoochee*, *Evening Song*, *Hymns of the Marshes*.

Poets of the Far West. — But poetry was no longer confined to the East and South. California has produced at least three poets of significance, Francis Bret Harte (1839–1902), Joaquin Miller (1841–1912), and Edward Rowland Sill (1841–1887). Bret Harte was primarily a writer of prose sketches, but such poems as *Plain Language from Truthful James*, *Jim*, *John Burns of Gettysburg*, *The Heathen Chinees*, and *Dickens in Camp* are deservedly popular. Miller was preëminently the poet of the adventurous life of the frontier. His principal books are *Songs of the Sierras* (1870) and *Songs of the Sunland* (1873). His poems have some imaginative splendor, but the workmanship is careless. Sill was a man of refined culture, for some years Professor of English Literature in the University of California. Three small volumes of poems bear his name.

Poetry of the Middle West. — The Middle West claims Eugene Field (1850–1895), James Whitcomb Riley (1853–19—), and William Vaughn Moody (1869–1910). Field won some reputation by his *Little Book of Western Verse* and by some very fine translations and paraphrases of Horace; and Riley has made a success of dialect poems of humble life.

These poems, however, do not constitute their most distinctive work. Both men are preëminently our poets of child life. Field's *With Trumpet and Drum* and Riley's *Rhymes of Childhood* are justly famous. Field's *Little Boy Blue* is undoubtedly a classic. Moody, though less popular, was a poet of much larger imaginative vision. Many consider him a poet of the very first rank. Such lyrics as *Gloucester Moors* and *Song-Flower and Poppy* are especially rich in imagery and melody. *The Brute* is a vision of what will evolve out of our sordid industrial system. The dramatic trilogy, *The Fire-Bringer*, *The Masque of Judgment*, and *The Death of Eve* (the last unfinished), represents the fullest expression of his vision of the meaning and worth of life.

Other Poets. — Hardly less popular than the poets already mentioned are Richard Watson Gilder (1844–), George Edmund Woodberry (1855–), Edwin Markham (1852–), Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872–1906), Bliss Carman (1861–), and many more. These are mere illustrations taken almost at random. Among successful women poets may be mentioned Lucy Larcom (1826–1893), Helen Hunt Jackson (1831–1885), Emily Dickinson (1830–1886), and Edith M. Thomas (1854–).

(b) FICTION

General Characteristics. — In prose fiction the period since the Civil War has been especially rich. Indeed, stories of almost every kind have been innumerable, the long story and the short story, the romance of adventure, the novel with a purpose, the novel of real life. Story-telling before the war had been largely confined to romances like those of Cooper and Hawthorne and Poe. There had been no particular effort to give a faithful picture of the common ex-

periences of common men. For the most part the characters were unusual and their experiences extraordinary. The aim was not so much to interpret life as to tell an interesting story. The tendency since the war has been decidedly in the direction of realism. Romances of mystery and adventure have not been entirely unknown; but for the most part the interest of plot with its elements of surprise and terror has been subordinated to the development of character in the midst of the actual problems of everyday life. The romance has been less prominent than the novel.

The Beginnings of Realism.—The beginning of this tendency is noticeable in the prose writings of Oliver Wendell Holmes. Holmes won his reputation as a poet before the Civil War, but most of his prose belongs to the later period. He was very near to the common life of his generation, being a lover of men and a social favorite, a prominent member of the famous Saturday Club, a brilliant and witty talker. *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*, *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*, *The Poet at the Breakfast Table*, and *Over the Tea-Cups* are books of clever conversation on a great variety of subjects always treated with individuality and vitalized with charming touches of humor and pathos. Strictly speaking, these books are neither romances nor novels, but they show a clear tendency away from the interest in stories of adventure. His novels proper, *Elsie Venner* (1861), *The Guardian Angel* (1867), *A Mortal Antipathy* (1885), though they contain much of mystery bordering on the supernatural, lay the emphasis on character study and particularly on the scientific problems of heredity, which had come to interest Holmes in the course of his profession of medicine. Indeed, these novels have been called "medicated novels" to indicate their scientific as opposed to romantic tendencies. - *The Guardian Angel* is perhaps the best.

Further Realistic Tendencies. — Realistic tendencies appear further in such stories as *Two Years before the Mast* by Richard Henry Dana, Jr., and *The Man without a Country* by Edward Everett Hale. *Two Years before the Mast* is a story of personal adventure told in a thoroughly realistic manner. *The Man without a Country* was commonly thought for a long time to be actual history. The most typical realists, however, are William Dean Howells and Henry James, Jr.

William Dean Howells (1837–) has been an avowed realist. The theory of his art is explained in his volume *Criticism and Fiction*. He has wished his work to be “true to the methods, the influences, the principles that shape the lives of actual men and women.” He would give us as nearly as possible a photograph of life, a reproduction of what he actually observes without much selection or rejection. Avoiding extraordinary characters and unusual events, he studies common men under ordinary circumstances, portraying the minutest incidents of their lives with painstaking exactness. He neither exalts their virtues nor emphasizes their vices. His books are full of commonplace, even trivial, experiences, neither rising to the heroic or sublime nor sinking to the coarse, the criminal, and the revolting. The interest lies not in the novelty of the incidents nor in the rush of the plot, but in the accuracy of detail, the skillful elaboration of incident, the charm of humor, the refinement of style.

His Works. — Mr. Howells' literary work is extensive and varied. He has written some poetry (*Poems* 1860, *Stops of Various Quills* 1895); many notable volumes of travel, biography, and criticism (*Venetian Life* 1866, *Italian Journeys* 1867, *Criticism and Fiction*, *My Literary Friends and Acquaintances* 1900), a few light comedies and farces (*The Mousetrap*, *The Parlor Car*, etc.). His most

important work, however, is the long list of realistic novels. Among the most popular are, *A Foregone Conclusion* (1874), *The Lady of the Aroostook* (1879), *A Modern Instance* (1882), *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), *The Minister's Charge* (1886), *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1889), *The World of Chance* (1893). For the most part the characters of these stories are familiar and commonplace. The appearances of life are emphasized to the neglect of its deeper mysteries. Only occasionally, as in the case of *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, does the author seek varied and tragic types.

Henry James (1843-). — The public mind usually associates with Mr. Howells the name of Henry James, an American by birth who has lived most of his life since 1869 in Europe. He is our most cosmopolitan writer. The name "international" is often applied to his novels. "He looks at America with the eyes of a foreigner and at Europe with the eyes of an American." *The American* (1877) has to do with a self-made man who expects his money to break down social barriers in Europe. *The Europeans* (1878) and *An International Episode* (1879) show Europeans as seen from the democratic standpoint of America. Prominent among his other novels are *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), *The Bostonians* (1886), *The Tragic Muse* (1890), *The Awkward Age* (1899), and *The Wings of the Dove* (1902). Mr. James has been a very prolific writer. His published volumes number close to fifty.

His Style. — The reader who demands in a novel a well-defined plot, a striking hero, and a rush of incident will not be satisfied with the novels of Mr. James. None of these elements of story-telling is prominent. Emphasis is placed upon careful analysis and accurate description. Actions and manners are depicted with what seems trivial minuteness. The story lags and dramatic effects are rare. The interest

lies largely in literary finesse, a polished, witty, brilliant style. Those who love elegance and accuracy and beauty of detail are fascinated, but most people find the style overwrought and the thought oversubtle.

Novels of Locality. — Many novels are interesting largely for their local color and for careful delineation of provincial types. New England has been depicted by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Ward (1844–), Mary E. Wilkins-Freeman (1862–), Sarah Orne Jewett (1849–), and John Townsend Trowbridge (1827–). Indiana of pioneer days is pictured by Edward Eggleston (1837–1902), whose *Hoosier Schoolmaster* (1871) is especially earnest and strong. Louisiana appears in the stories of George W. Cable (1844–), whose best books are usually thought to be *Grandissimes*, *Madam Delphine*, and *Dr. Sevier*. Tennessee is represented by Charles Egbert Craddock (Miss Murfree) (1850–), whose most popular book has been *The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains* (1885). The plantation negro with his odd dialect and grotesque superstition has been exploited in the stories of Thomas Nelson Page (1853–) and Joel Chandler Harris (1848–1908). The blue-grass region of Kentucky is interpreted by James Lane Allen (1848–) in *A Kentucky Cardinal* and *The Choir Invisible*. These are only a few of the most important novels of locality. The list might be greatly increased.

Romances. — Although the prevailing tendency has been realistic, romance has also flourished to a degree. Some of the stories of locality mentioned above, notably the stories of James Lane Allen, have a decided romantic coloring. One of the most popular of the romanticists has been Edward Payson Roe (1838–1888). His books have been more popular than they really deserve, for they are almost without exception sentimental and conventional. Examples are *Barriers*

Burned Away, *The Opening of a Chestnut Burr*, and *Near to Nature's Heart*. Much of the work of Francis Marion Crawford (1854-1909) is frankly romantic, not in the weird and mysterious manner of Hawthorne and Poe, but in the sense that they are written primarily for entertainment. Crawford believed a story should be "an intellectual artistic luxury," not "an intellectual moral lesson." His best known stories are *Saracinesca*, *Sant' Ilario*, *Don Orsino*, and *Corleone*. Frank R. Stockton (1834-1902) used the methods of romance for humorous ends. His stories are whimsical and fantastic. The longer ones, however, *Rudder Grange*, *The Late Mrs. Null*, and *The Hundredth Man*, are not so interesting as the short stories. *The Lady or the Tiger* has been almost universally read. F. Hopkinson Smith's *Colonel Carter of Cartersville* is a humorous story of almost equal popularity.

Humorists. — The more distinctly humorous writers are Charles Farrer Browne (Artemus Ward) (1834-1867), Bill Nye (1850-1896), Robert J. Burdette (1844-), Henry W. Shaw (Josh Billings) (1818-1885), David Ross Locke (Petroleum V. Nasby) (1833-1888), and above all Samuel L. Clemens (Mark Twain) (1835-1910). Of these Mark Twain is the most noteworthy. He alone has a distinctly literary reputation. He is great not merely because his humor is spontaneous and irresistible. His deep insight into life and his power to create original characters are what place his work high. His Mississippi stories, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), and *Huckleberry Finn* (1884), in spite of obvious impossibilities, are chapters out of the heart of a life which "Mark Twain" knew from most intimate experience. Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn are genuine incarnations of Young America. *Innocents Abroad* (1869) ridicules the sham enthusiasm and

easy gullibility of the ordinary tourist. These books are not always well constructed; the humor is often rough, even coarse; but there are few dull pages. Mark Twain is really a prince of entertainers.

The Historical Romance. — Of late years, the historical romance has had an enormous popularity. Lew Wallace's *Ben Hur, a Tale of the Christ*, Dr. S. Weir Mitchell's *Hugh Wynne*, Paul Leicester Ford's *Janice Meredith*, and Winston Churchill's *The Crisis* have all run into many editions; and the list could be increased by many more almost as popular.

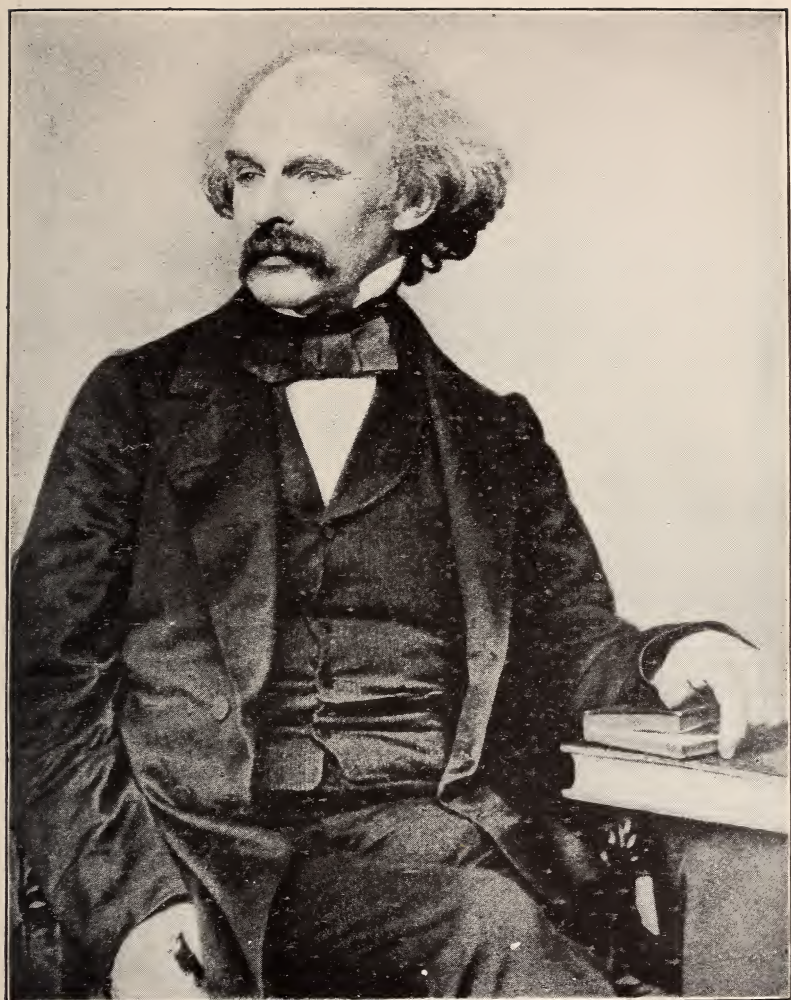
(c) ORATORY AND MISCELLANEOUS PROSE

The Orators. — Since the Civil War the style of public speaking has greatly changed. The orations of Webster, Everett, and Choate were elaborate, stately, rhetorical. Modern oratory is plain, direct, conversational. Wendell Phillips represents the transition. Abraham Lincoln and George William Curtis belong distinctly to the modern school. Phillips' Phi Beta Kappa oration at Harvard in 1881 on *The Scholar in a Republic* and Curtis's reply entitled *The Leadership of Educated Men* should be read together as typical examples of modern oratory. Pulpit oratory is well represented by Henry Ward Beecher (1813–1887) and Phillips Brooks (1835–1893). Henry W. Grady (1851–1889), the orator of the New South, won a wide reputation as a brilliant and fascinating speaker. Charles W. Eliot is remarkable for his pure and lucid style. Not much of present-day oratory, however, is usually classed among the masterpieces of literature.

The Essayists. — The essay writing of the modern period is largely the product of the widespread vocation of journalism. It is hard to say how much of it should be classed as literature.

A few names only can be mentioned here and those as merely illustrative. James Russell Lowell's essays stand first in time and perhaps also in significance. His poetry belongs to the earlier period, but the prose is for the most part more recent. The important volumes are *Among my Books* (1870, 1876), *My Study Windows* (1871), *Political Essays* (1888), *Latest Literary Essays and Addresses* (1891), and *The Old English Dramatists* (1892). Most of these essays are on literary subjects. They are very charming, humorous, and suggestive, the product of a richly cultured mind. With Lowell should be mentioned Edmund C. Stedman (1833-1908), whose *Victorian Poets*, *The Poets of America*, and *The Nature and Elements of Poetry* are universally considered significant books. Charles Dudley Warner's *My Summer in a Garden* (1870) and *Back-log Studies* (1872) show charming humor and a graceful finished style. Lovers of sentiment have been delighted with Donald G. Mitchell's *Reveries of a Bachelor* and *Dream Life*. The new interest in nature and in the out-door life has found its high priest in John Burroughs (1837-). Something of his work is indicated by the titles of his books, *Wake-Robin* (1871), *Winter Sunshine* (1875), *Birds and Poets* (1877), *Locusts and Wild Honey* (1879), *Fresh Fields* (1884). Other writers about nature are Maurice Thompson and Ernest Thompson Seton.

The Historians. — Recent historians have not been so remarkable for literary qualities as for accuracy of scholarship, industry in collecting material, diligence in preparing bibliographies, and care in indicating the sources of material. Some of the most important writers have been Goldwin Smith, Justin Winsor, Andrew D. White, John Fiske, Woodrow Wilson. None of these, except possibly John Fiske, has made genuine literature out of his history. Fiske's principal histories are *The Critical Period of American History* (1888),



Nathaniel Hawthorne.

The Beginnings of New England (1889), *The American Revolution*. (1891), *The Discovery of America* (1892), and *Old Virginia and her Neighbors* (1897). These books show accuracy and breadth of view, and are written in a lucid and brilliant style. Even Fiske's histories are not so widely read as his philosophical essays, *Darwinism* (1879), *The Destiny of Man* (1884), *American Political Ideas* (1885), and *The Idea of God* (1885). The tendency of to-day is to make history scientific at the expense of literary qualities.

SUGGESTED READINGS

- Aldrich : *Cloth of Gold, Flower and Thorn*.
Allen : *The Choir Invisible*.
Craddock, Charles Egbert : *The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains*.
Dana : *Two Years before the Mast*.
Eggleston : *The Hoosier Schoolmaster*.
Field : *With Trumpet and Drum*.
Howells : *A Hazard of New Fortunes*.
James : *The American, The Europeans*.
Riley : *Rhymes of Childhood*.
Twain, Mark : *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn*.
Smith, F. Hopkinson : *Colonel Carter of Cartersville*.
Wallace : *Ben Hur*.
Whitman : *Drum Taps*.

CHAPTER XI

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SHORT-STORY¹

Importance of the Short-Story. — The development of the short-story in America is important enough to deserve separate treatment. No other form of literary art has been more popular; no other form owes so much of its artistic development to American writers. It has suited the temper of the busy American reader better than the long novel. It has easily adapted itself to the needs of the monthly magazine. Many of our important writers owe their reputations largely to their skill in short-story writing. The output has steadily increased until to-day this form of art threatens to monopolize the literary market.

Debt to the Periodical Essay. — The earliest important writer of short-stories in America was Washington Irving. He was a follower of Addison and began by writing short sketches and essays similar to those in *The Spectator*. Addison used the story to illustrate some moral and didactic exposition. A principle was set down and then exemplified by a story. The story was not told for its own sake. Irving differed from Addison in putting more emphasis on the story and less on the principle. He also differed in his romantic tendencies, cultivating emotional and atmospheric effects, which Addison neglected. He was almost the first to give artistic form in fiction to the mystery and superstition of

¹ For much in this chapter, the author is indebted to Canby's *A Study of the Short-Story in English*.

the romanticists. To this he added humor and the charm of a graceful style. *The Spectre Bridegroom* illustrates his method. *Rip Van Winkle* and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* show an admirable blending of humor and romance.

The Work of Hawthorne. — Nathaniel Hawthorne continued the development. Traces of the essay idea are to be found in his stories, but he merged the story and the moral. Instead of telling the story to illustrate a moral which was stated in didactic form at the beginning or the end, he made the central interest of the story itself a moral situation. *The Birthmark* is a good example. The germinal idea of this story is thus expressed in Hawthorne's *American Note-Books*, in which he was in the habit of putting down suggestions for stories: "A person to be the death of his beloved in trying to raise her to more than mortal perfection; yet this should be a comfort to him for having aimed so highly and holily." This moral situation is made to exemplify the futility of the search for human perfection. It is not, however, stated as a proposition to be illustrated, but is made the central emotional interest of the story. It gives unity and concentration to the story itself. Hawthorne did much for the development of the idea of a central situation. He embodied his moral theme in a concrete situation. Other examples besides *The Birthmark* are *The Great Stone Face*, *The Snow Image*, *The Ambitious Guest*, *Rappaccini's Daughter*, *The Gray Champion*, and *Ethan Brand*.

The Unity of Emotional Impression. — Edgar Allan Poe did much to further centralize and intensify the interest of the story. He made everything subordinate to the single emotional impression which he wished to produce. He believed that every fact, every word, should be chosen for its effect on this single emotional impression. Everything should point directly toward the climax. In *The*

Cask of Amontillado, for example, every event works toward the climax of revenge and helps to intensify the cold horror of that climax. Even the first sentence starts us toward the goal: "The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could; but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge." Poe also developed the power of holding the reader in suspense until the climax. Indeed, his prevailing method is the method of suspense. The reader looks forward to the end with breathless anticipation. *The Fall of the House of Usher* well illustrates this concentration of emotion and tension of suspense. The gloomy mood with which the story opens is developed into a morbid nervous tension which breaks suddenly, just as the old house bursts asunder and sinks into the tarn. *Ligeia* is also a masterpiece of concentration and tension.

The Detective Story. — Poe also developed in his tales the kind of interest which belongs to the modern detective story. The detective as a character appears only twice, but the intellectual zest of following clues to their logical conclusions furnishes the central interest of many of the plots. In *The Gold Bug*, a cipher written on an old piece of parchment, is found to be the clue to a hidden treasure; and the clue is followed until the treasure is discovered. *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* solves the problem of mysterious murders. The interest of *The Purloined Letter* lies in a similarly close chain of reasoning. In emotional intensity and plot interest, the stories of Poe have rarely been equalled. Poe was the founder of the Short-Story as a conscious literary form. The events are often impossible and the mood frequently morbid, but the emotional tension and the climatic plot interest are always wrought out with great technical skill.

Fitz-James O'Brien. — The traditions of short-story writing established by Poe were continued by Fitz-James

O'Brien, a brilliant Irishman from Dublin University, who came to America to retrieve his broken fortunes and who died at the age of thirty-four of a wound received in a battle of the Civil War. His best short-story, *What was It; a Mystery*, is a tale of the mysterious and horrible quite in the manner of Poe. The characters are abnormal. All the interest centers in the single emotional impression of supernatural dread arising out of the struggle to overcome a mysterious being which has a definite form and which breathes and struggles, but which is quite invisible. The story is well organized and made plausible by means of commonplace details. Other important stories by O'Brien are *The Diamond Lens* and *The Wondersmith*.

Hale's Man without a Country. — Edward Everett Hale wrote one great short-story, *The Man without a Country*. It is written more in the manner of Hawthorne than in the manner of Poe. The interest lies in a single situation, the terrible and pathetic condition of an army officer whose wish that he may never again see the flag of his country or hear his country's name, is granted. The plot is not remarkably well constructed, but the intense patriotism which is wrought into the central situation has made the story justly popular.

The Work of Bret Harte. — The stories of Bret Harte are neither morbid like Poe's nor symbolic like Hawthorne's, yet he seems to have united to advantage the technical merits of both his great predecessors. He emphasized both the central situation and the single emotional impression. Two of his best stories are *The Luck of Roaring Camp* and *The Outcasts of Poker Flat*. The first of these has its central situation in the house warming held in honor of the first baby born in a rough California mining camp. The situation rises to an emotional climax when Kentuck lies dead with the baby still grasping his fingers. In *The Outcasts of Poker Flat*

four disreputable characters, who have been driven from the town, are overtaken by a snowstorm on a mountain and thus brought face to face with death. As the climax approaches, the inherent nobility of the characters comes to the surface. The emotional climax is reached when Piney and the Duchess die in each other's arms. Bret Harte also made much of "local color." The California of early days is picturesquely presented; not, perhaps, with absolute truthfulness, but with what has been called "romantic truth." The essential spirit of the time and the place are in the stories. Bret Harte gives us the genuine romance of the frontier. His important stories in addition to those mentioned are *Tennessee's Partner*, *Miggles*, and *How Santa Claus Came to Simpson's Bar*.

Humorous Short-Stories. — The scope of the short-story was much broadened by the humorists, especially by Mark Twain, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, and Frank R. Stockton. These writers developed, not tragical and emotional, but light and surprising situations. Mark Twain's *The Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*, in which the frog could not jump because of the shot in his belly, is a mere joke worked into a short-story. The point of Aldrich's *Marjorie Daw* is the surprising outcome of a love affair, in which the heroine turns out to be a purely fictitious character. Stockton's *The Lady or the Tiger* is a problem story which leaves the reader puzzled. The problem is so artfully stated that it can never be solved. Thus the tragedy is suddenly changed into comedy. This kind of story, based on light and surprising situations, has been much cultivated; but, for the most part, the work has not been finished and strong. H. C. Bunner's *Short Sixes* is a typical volume.

Local Color. — Much of the interest in certain short-stories lies in the setting, in picturing the characteristic life of par-

ticular districts. Nearly every part of the country has been thus exploited. Bret Harte set the example in treating life in California. George W. Cable's *Old Creole Days* is remarkable not so much for the story interest proper as for the descriptions of Louisiana characters and manners. In Miss Murfree's collection of stories called *In the Tennessee Mountains*, the story interest is subordinated to interest in the life of a belated and almost forgotten people. Hamlin Garland has dealt with the middle west in *Main Traveled Roads*. Life in Virginia is charmingly portrayed in Thomas Nelson Page's *In Ole Virginia* and in other collections of his short-stories. New England appears in the stories of Sarah Orne Jewett and Mrs. Wilkins-Freeman. Of these two New England writers Professor Canby says :

"Miss Jewett was not content with the superficialities of the local life she studies. In *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896), and like stories, she tried to establish a true relationship between the rocky country she loved and its weathered inhabitants. Mrs. Wilkins-Freeman, whose pen is far more skillful, goes further. With her, the setting is interesting only for its effect upon the dwellers of her hill country. She deals with the subtle influence of a hard, unlovely life upon temperament; she is a conscientious realist, who constructs her little stories as carefully as Maupassant himself. . . . With her, the local-color story in English reaches its highest point of finesse; but loses in vividness, and sometimes in force."

The Vignette. — Professor Brander Matthews calls a volume of his local-color stories *Vignettes of Manhattan*. The name suggests a central situation thoroughly elaborated, the events which surround that situation shading off in interest in various directions. It calls attention to the method of constructing the stories. *Spring in a Side Street* is a typical example of the stories in this volume. A young man, just recovering from an illness, is sitting at the window

of his room, a hall bedroom, watching what is going on in the street below. His reflections on the changing scene present the crisis of his life in high relief and treat with less intensity his past and his future. These stories show the tendency of local-color stories generally to emphasize the incidental element of setting at the expense of the more vital narrative element.

The Analytical Short-Story. — In still other stories the plot interest is overshadowed by subtle psychological analysis. The great master of this form is Henry James, Jr. He is interested not so much in the external situation as in the inner experience. Subtle shading in character, fine discrimination in analyzing motives, a painstaking view of character and situation from all possible angles — these are Mr. James's main concern. *The Madonna of the Future* presents a painter who believes a great madonna may yet be painted, but whose ideal of what she should be is always in advance of his powers of execution. His insight grows faster than his technical skill. Indeed, as old age approaches, the one increases while the other decays. His ideal flowers; but his power to execute withers, and, in the end, the canvas remains bare. *The Real Thing* is a subtle portrayal of aristocratic manners, which have become a part of character. Major Monarch and his wife are still aristocratic, though they have been stripped of wealth and circumstance and are reduced to posing as painters' models. Mr. James's attitude toward his subject is peculiar. He does not enter into the passions of life as Poe does, nor is he a moral analyst like Hawthorne. He is rather an intellectual analyst, interested simply in explaining the phenomena of life rationally. To him, the mind of man is an interesting machine, which he delights in taking apart, adjusting, and putting in motion again. His work represents the short-story in its most

elaborate development. Besides *The Madonna of the Future* and *The Real Thing*, his best known short stories are *The Beldonald Holbein*, *The Liar*, and *Paste*.

Contemporary Stories. — The twentieth century has seen no abatement of the popularity of the short-story. No form of literature has a wider vogue to-day. Short-stories crowd the monthly magazines and the Sunday supplements and find their way even into the daily newspaper. The writers who have achieved popularity are numerous. Among the most popular are O. Henry (William Sidney Porter), Jack London, Edith Wharton, Octave Thanet, Owen Wister, Henry Van Dyke, and Gouverneur Morris. And these are only illustrative. No doubt there are many others almost if not quite as significant. A discriminating judgment should not yet be attempted. Suffice it to say that American writers continue to excel in this form of art. It may be true that the short-story of to-day is in danger from its very popularity. We are told that it is becoming journalistic rather than literary, vulgarized in subject-matter and in style; that the writing of short-stories has been reduced to a mere handicraft; and that the drama is the rising art form. We cannot, however, be sure of present tendencies, and prophecy is always dangerous.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Aldrich: *Marjorie Daw*.

Garland: *The Return of a Private*, *Among the Corn Rows*.

Hale: *The Man without a Country*.

Harte, Bret: *The Outcasts of Poker Flat*, *The Luck of Roaring Camp*, *Tennessee's Partner*.

Hawthorne: *The Birthmark*, *Ethan Brand*.

Henry, O.: *The Hiding of Black Bill*.

Irving: *Rip Van Winkle*, *The Legend of Sleepy-Hollow*.

James, Henry, Jr.: *The Real Thing, The Madonna of the Future, The Liar.*

Jewett, Sarah Orne: *The King of Folly Island.*

London, Jack: *To Build a Fire.*

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